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from the sky will
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of terror. He will bring
the great king of the
mongrels. Before and
after war will reign.

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KNOWN TO MAN

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Assively Multiplayer. We use a marketing catch-phrase to help put our twist on the shifting paradigms of online gameplaying. PEOPLE WITH NO LIVES MUST READ THIS!!!

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Homeworld: A new dimension to explore, and some deep gameplay issues are exposed. Plus TAFKAP (or "Prince" as we call him) makes a guest appearance

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Sports Illu-Xtro-ted — the usual collection of madness, games, and news, delivered like everyone's favorite weekly. It's like being in the waiting room of a dentist's office.

Special thanks to reader Jeffrey Barbor for special contributions to this month's folio fillers

ON THE COVER

Two of these three hotties (Carolina and Teresa) are professional models. The third, Lindsay, is currently working for one of our even geekier stepsister magazines downstairs. Lindsay was kind (and hot) enough to stand in for Gia, who suffered a sprained ankle during a nude mudwrestling match the previous evening. When asked about her replacement, Gia said, "Yeah, she's cool and all, but that little tramp better stay away from my sexy boys!" (Or was that "sex toys"?) Photography by Jack Hutcheson

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82 SINISTAR
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84 SHADOW COMPANY
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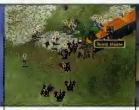
87 NOCTURNE
World Exclusive review of a game you MUST play, albeit only on a super-high end system. Turn out the lights and have fun

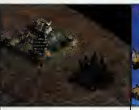
90 TOCA 2
An acronym, a racing game — woo-frickin-hoo. Rob says it doesn't rain this much in the UK, but we're not taking any chances

91 FREESPACE 2
Like to blow stuff up? This could be the game for you. See if this purty game is worth the mammoth 1.2 gigs of hard drive space



94 CUTTHROATS
Sounds like a reasonable form of punishment to us for the guys that created this rancid piece of poo posing as a game.

95 HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
Ok, if you liked *Rainbow Six*, then you'll recognize this as a direct copy.



98 SEVEN KINGDOMS II
That's a total of nine for those keeping score (or would it be 14?). Everyone else, ignore this confusion and read the review.

99 AOE II
It's from Microsoft and it is still good — damn! Why don't you just drink Starbucks, shop at the Gap, and go buy this game?

104 LEGACY OF KAIN
Is this a console game with PC values or little more than a *Tomb Raider* clone without the babe? Find out here

CELEBRITIES THAT HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM OUR "LIST"

Jesus "The Body" Ventura for saying what we were thinking, **Todd Bridges** for singing the "Different Strokes" theme song for a punk album, **Heidi Klum** for modelling the Victoria's Secret 15 million dollar millennium bra – officially making her out of our price range, **Martha Stewart** and **Vince McMahon** for having IPOs that make them rich enough to buy the bra right off **Heidi Klum**, **Brad Pitt** for making the rest of us out of shape men look bad, **Carson Daly** for having dated **Jennifer Love Hewitt** – lucky SOB

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In case you've been staying up nights, wracking your brain, wondering what we want for Christmas, Mike gives you a handy list to bring to the mall. Now bring on the booty!

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Technology ruining games? Is Mike's medication ruining his mind? Inquisitive (you could almost legally say "Enquiring") minds want to know.

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What's that sound? Is it eight tiny reindeer up on the roof? No, it's Ed and Kyle clicking away at their computers, burning the midnight oil, churning out another pair of great discs for your holiday gaming enjoyment.

The Millennium Bra was made to fit Heidi Klum, that alone is worth 15 million

.....SOMETIMES NEGOTIATING REQUIRES MORE THAN A HANDSHAKE.

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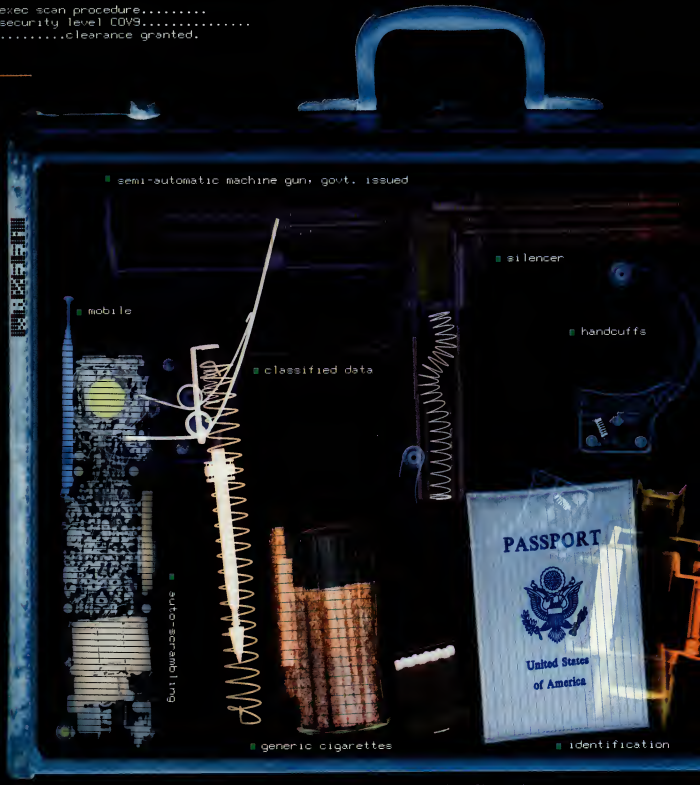

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- E3 ACTION GAME OF SHOW - ALL GAMES NETWORK
- E3 BEST OF SHOW - THRESH'S FIRING SQUAD

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You interact.

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IT'S TIME TO START GIVIN'

Christmas is a time for giving. After all, "they" say it is much better to give than to receive. Well I'm damn tired of giving. Every month **PCXL** gives you hours of entertainment, piles of information, and even a few pictures of babes. What else can we give you? This issue we give you the lowdown on every game in development, a Christmas buyer's guide (complete with Santa Honeys), and our usual combination of in-depth PC gaming coverage and bizarre insights. Oh, did I forget to mention our two discs with over 25 demos? So we're sick of giving and ready to start receiving. This is your chance to give back to "the kids" (in this case, and this case only, "the kids" refers to us). We realize that not everyone has a lot of money to spend, so we've included different economic categories for you to find the gift that fits your budget.

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CATEGORY --> "I don't give a crap about you guys, but I'm tired of hearing you whine"
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$10 Gift Certificates — We're poor and we don't shop much, anything will help
Adult ID Numbers — Why should you pay $19 and not share with us?

CATEGORY --> "I donated my life savings to Jerry Fallwell, so why not you"
POTENTIAL GIFTS --> **Gadgets** — Nomads, Palm Pilots, or anything small and electronic
Decent clothes — You've seen our pictures, so you know we could use some help (the Gap does not count as "clothes")

CATEGORY --> "I'm so filthy rich I could buy your whole magazine"
POTENTIAL GIFTS --> **Fast cars** — Porsche Boxter, Ferrari, any souped-up car ... we aren't too picky
Island Villas — Preferably somewhere in the Mediterranean, but anywhere sunny will do (we'd also like English servants)

If you can't manage any of these gifts because you are too damn lazy or just don't care about us, then the least you can do is read through this entire issue and give us some feedback on what else we can give you greedy bastards.

Thanks in advance, and Merry Christmas.

MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

THE TEAM

SPOTTHE FAKEAD

Every issue of PCXL contains one ad that just isn't right. Find the faux ad and send your answer to pcxl@pcxl.com to be eligible for "fabulous" prizes.

NOVEMBER'S FAKE AD --> *Reclium: Avenging Proctologist*

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Thanks for joining us.

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WHAT DISC IS THIS?

DISC! THE HERALD ANGEL SINGS

Here's a coupla Christmas carols we created just for y'all ...

O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc!
How are thy demos sa verdant!
O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc,
How are thy demos sa verdant!

Nat anly in the summertime,
But even winter is Disc 1's prime.
O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc,
How are thy demos sa verdant!

O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc,
Thy patches shine aut brightly!
O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc,
Thy patches shine aut brightly!

Disc 2 dath hald lats of light,
That makes each game to sparkle bright.
O Christmas disc, O Christmas disc,
Thy patches shine aut brightly!

And finally ...

Brisbane sidewalks, busy sidewalks,
Dressed in paganistic style
In the air, there's a feeling
af Christmas

Insane laughing, demos crashing
Missed deadline after deadline,
And an ev'ry disc burner yau'll hear

Silver discs, silver discs
It's Christmas time at **PCXL**
Ring-a-ling, hear them spin
Saan it will be Christmas break

Heaps af free games
Even the Hall af Ass
Is completely empty
As the editars rush
Hame with their treasures

Hear the discs whirl,
See the babes hurl
When they see aur magazine
And abave the saund af discs
breaking, yau'll hear

Silver discs, silver discs
It's Christmas time at **PCXL**
Ring-a-ling, hear them spin
Saan it will be Christmas break

LEGEND

- (D) DEMO
- A/V
- PATCHES
- MAPS
- TOOLS
- (?) RATING

DISC ONE

- (D) UNREAL TOURNAMENT
- (D) DELTA FORCE 2
- (D) TACHYON: THE FRINGE
- (D) NBA 2000
- (D) SOUL REAVER
- (D) TRIBES
- (D) THIEF GOLD
- (D) GRAND THEFT AUTO 2
- (D) SHADOW COMPANY
- (D) RAYMAN 2
- (D) SINISTAR: UNLEASHED
- (D) TARZAN
- (D) WARTORN
- (D) CUTTHROATS
- (D) AGE OF WONDERS
- (D) HYPE
- (D) MANKIND

DISC TWO

- BROOD WAR
- (D) CODENAME EAGLE
- DRAKAN
- DARKSTONE
- FREESPACE 2
- HEROES III
- HOMEWORLD
- KINGPIN
- MADDEN 2000
- (D) MECHWARRIOR 3
- (D) NBA LIVE 2000
- (D) NBA 2000
- (D) NOCTURNE
- (D) ODIUM
- DRIVER
- PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D
- REVOLT
- SETTLERS III
- SYSTEM SHOCK 2
- STARCRAFT
- TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS
- ARMY MEN: TOYS IN SPACE
- TRIBES
- TIBERIAN SUN
- UNREAL TOURNAMENT
- (D) WILD WILD WEST

Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, and is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. The bar on the left can also be used. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, the rest is easy.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

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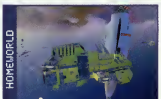
THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: You said you were waiting for a sign. What sign are you waiting for?
A: Gazer the Trazyter. He will come in one of the pre-chosen forms. During the rectification of the Vuldrini, the traveler came as a large and moving Torg. Then, during the third reconciliation of the last of the McKetrick supplicants, they chose a new form for him — that of a giant Stor.

Q: Do you have any hobbies?
A: I collect spores, molds and fungus.

Q Are you the Keymaster?
A: Yes actually I'm a friend of his — he asked me to meet him here.

Q: What the hell was last month's Mini-FAQ all about?
A: *Army of Darkness*



Barbarian

Living on the fringes of civilization, the Barbarian has developed superior battle tactics in order to survive. In fact, he believes he can call upon the totemic animal spirits to infuse him with supernormal strengths and abilities.

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DIABLO II™

Vengeance Was Only The Beginning

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Seize it.

THE WHEEL OF TIME™

Based on the best-selling fantasy series by Robert Jordan

The Kingdom. The Power. The Glory.

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Try diplomacy first.

You can always invade them later.

AVALON HILL'S

Diplomacy

Bring out your inner dictator

May your wit be as sharp as your sword, because Avalon Hill's Diplomacy has captured the true spirit of the legendary board game. You'll start as one of the seven pre-WWI superpowers, England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, and Austria-Hungary. These political boundaries will become your prey as you negotiate your way to the top. Beg, threaten, plead and argue your way past nations where friends become pawns and enemies become allies. You'll have to be cunning. Smooth. And deceitful. This is a game that can't be left to chance.

RATING PENDING ESRB

HASBRO INTERACTIVE

MICROPROSE

www.microprose.com

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Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411**: Product Number 99

Every Single Game Known To Man*

PC Accelerator celebrates the shape of games to come with the "B.M.F.L. 2K" – a roster of PC titles slated for the year 2000 and beyond

*Apart from crappy hunting games, "edutainment," kids nonsense and all those we might have forgot

"SO," EDITOR ROB SMITH says to me one evening at the Club-i computer cafe in San Francisco, "We're thinking of doing a feature on PC games in development for the year 2000." It seems like a natural idea to me, coming up on the holiday as we are, and as he offers to buy me a beer – this should set off a low-level neural alarm, but I'm not paying attention yet – I'm already thinking of the titles I would choose to focus on. So many titles to sift through, so many to choose from, so many cool projects in development, so many pics of half-naked girls to consider ...

"Wow, that's a tough narrow-down," I mutter ruminatively, studying the ceiling. "Maybe games with some kinda millennial theme...."

"Narrow-down?" Rob asks, and blinks exactly once behind his glasses, just the way an ex-patriot Brit might in the midst of a colossal misunderstanding.

"Maybe the top-ten most anticipated," I continue, soft-focusing on the club's exposed ductwork. "Kinda clichéd, I know, but always popular ..."

"Um." Rob says, and begins that leaning-forward thing editors like to do so much while trying to drive a point home.

"*Or*," I continue, eyes widening – really off to the races now – "*Or*, maybe, like, the most-anticipated title from each genre, you know, like *Duke Nukem Forever* and *Warcraft III*. Kind of a pain in the ass for me, you know, to knock it all out and get screenshots and everything, but it could be pretty cool ..."

"Err." Rob actually uses the word *err* fairly often, another Brit thing. "Actually, I was thinking more along the lines of *all* the games in development."

There's a long silence. I'm waiting for him to crack a smile or fart or burst into flames or *something*, but he just sits there, looking at me. In the distance – I remember this quite clearly – a toilet flushes.

Me, quietly: "Can ... can I have the beer now?"

Turns out, typically, Club-i doesn't even *serve* beer.

BY CHRIS HUDAK

Here it begins – every game you would possibly want to know about. In going through the morass of creativity that's flourishing all over the known world, we edited out loads of crap. Missing are the *Borbie*, *Lego*, and *Tonko* games. Missing are the *Scrobble 2*'s of this world. Missing are games that will be out when you read this. What you have is the most complete, entertaining and sheer exhaustive collection of games you'll ever need.

MASTER LIST

12 o' Clock High
Talonsoft; Talonsoft; *11/99*
www.talonsoft.com

Turn-based strategy in the aerial mold of *Bottle of Britain* as you control the allied P-51 and B-17 squadrons aiming to flatten the Reichland and nab a few Jerry Messerschmitts along the way.

20,000 Leagues – The Adventure Continues
SouthPeak; SouthPeak; *Q2 2000*
www.southpeak.com

Play the leader of a dive team in this live-action adventure using FMV the way that SouthPeak insists on pursuing.

Age of Sail 2
Some Russians; Talonsoft; *Mid 2000*
www.talonsoft.com

Tapping Eastern Europe Talonsoft's search for talent includes another Russian outfit working on the sequel to the maritime conflict original that received some positive reviews.

Age of Wonders
Epic Games; god; *11/99*
www.epicgames.com

Explore the fragile balance between the ancient races, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, and others in a rich fantasy world where magic and primitive technology coexist. A definite contender for *Heroes of Might and Magic*'s crown.

Alien Resurrection: The Game
Argonaut; Fox Interactive; *12/99*
www.foxinteractive.com

3D action/adventure set on the research vessel from the film.

Allegiance
Microsoft; Microsoft; *Q2 2000*
www.microsoft.com/games/

Space combat, with the promise of multiplayer games on the Zone for "two to 200 players."

Amen: The Awakening
Cavedog; Cavedog; *Q1 2000*
www.cavedog.com

Epic first-person action/adventure with *Half-Life* style scripted events.

American McGee's Alice
Rogue Entertainment; EA; *Q2 2000*
www.alice.ea.com

Former id level designer is elevated to Sid Meier and John Romero status by having his name attached to a new *Q3A*-engine based action game set around the trippy Alice in Wonderland story.

Anachronox
Ion Storm; Eidos; *Q2 2000*
www.ionstorm.com

The *Quake II* engine is tweaked like never before in Tom Hall's first person/RPG. Complete with its own scripting camera engine and in-game programming language, the flexibility for some amazing plot twists and character development is amazing.

Anno 1602
Sunflowers; GT Interactive; *12/99*
www.anno1602.com

Already released in Europe (and massive in its native Germany), this realtime strategy game in the mold of *The Settlers* will soon reach US shores.

Arcanum
Troika Games; Sierra; *Q3 2000*
www.troikagames.com

From the core team that created RPG hit, *Fallout*, comes an RPG without classes. A point-based system will let you mold a character to your own specifications. The setting is high-fantasy and the game will feature an option for realtime or turn-based combat.

Arcatera
Westka Kommunikation; Ubi Soft; *Q1 2000*
www.ubisoft.com

You have three weeks (in-game) to solve a criminal investigation in the fantasy world of Arcatera.

Asheron's Call
Turbine; Microsoft; *12/99*
www.turbinegames.com

Online fantasy roleplaying, with the emphasis on roleplaying in a massive world. The allegiance system (very much akin to pyramid selling structures) will create an intriguing social ladder where players are nobles. Also, the skill-based system lets you create any type of character you want.

Automobili Lamborghini 99
Titus Software; Titus Software; *12/99*
www.titusgames.com

Racing simulator with the one and only Lamborghini.

Battlecruiser Millennium 3000AD; TBA; *Q1 2000*
www.3000ad.com

Oh yes. Filling in the time before the BC3020AD, *Millennium* uses elements of 3020's forthcoming graphics engine, but only supports 8-player multiplayer.

Battlecruiser 3020AD
3000AD; Interplay; *Late 2000*
www.3000ad.com

The official sequel to the much troubled (though eventually impressive) Battlecruiser space flight combat game adds ground units and fighting as well as a persistent massively multiplayer online world. The 32-bit textures look amazing and you'll be able to walk around your ships in first-person (and therefore fight off any boarding attempts).

Tribes 2
Dynamix; Sierra; *Q1 2000*
www.sierra.com

The sequel is set to feature a new terrain engine, new weapons, and a brand-new tribe – the BioDerms. This will be in addition to the improved AI routines that will ship with the forthcoming (and tragically titled) *Tribes Extreme*.

At least 50 maps will ship with the game, along with an auto-download function for getting new maps. In addition, the user and mod community will have the benefits of new map creation tools. That's on top of the 32-bit color, volumetric fog and dynamic lighting that will make the maps look far better than the original. Of course, the characters will also have an increased poly count, and more details and options for user customization.

Rather than repeating the words "Developer," "Pulisher," and "release date" a gazillion times here is the format for the list ...

Game Title
Developer; Publisher; *release date*
web site

Battle Isle 4
Blue Byte; Blue Byte; *Q3 2000*
www.bluebyte.com

Coming some five years after the release of the last in this series, Blue Byte is resurrecting it's critically acclaimed turn-based strategy series for a new installment powered by the latest in 3D technology. A massive hit in Europe, the detail of the turn-based combat was awesome, and backed by a new engine, should be a big hit.

Battlezone 2
Activision; Pandemic; *12/99*
www.activision.com

New features include morphing units, air support, AI that gains experience, and lots of love. As the original tried to break new genre ground, the scene should now be set for greater commercial appreciation of this hybrid.

Black & White
Lionhead Studios; EA; *Q2 2000*
www.lionhead.co.uk

Play as a godlike wizard vying for tribe worship, with wild creature-raising as the frosting.

Bloodshot
Iguana UK; Acclaim; *12/99*
www.acclaim.net

3D shooter with high gore factor, based on the comic.

Boarder Zone
Infogrames; *Q2 2000*
www.infogrames.net

Snowboarding games are a mainstay of consoles, but this PC variant sports some very impressive graphics. Play one of six characters in four play modes.

Carmaggedon: TDR 2000
Sci; *Late 2000*
www.scl.co.uk

More motoring mayhem built around an all-new engine focusing on internet playability for multi-player madness.

Close Combat 4: Battle of the Bulge
Atomic Games; Mindscape; *12/99*
www.atomicgames.com

Mindscape will publish the latest in this critically acclaimed line of WWII strategy combat games.

Codename Eagle
PAN Interactive; Talonsoft; *2/2000*
www.talonsoft.com

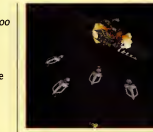
A first-person action game that allows you to fly planes and drive vehicles in a parallel universe of 1927. Twelve missions set in different parts of the world cover a wide range of strategic planning options and action.

Commandos 2
Pyro Studios; Eidos; *Summer 2000*
www.pyrostudios.com

A huge European hit, this WWII strategy game spawns the requisite sequel. We saw this game at E3 and the graphics engine was astonishing. Combine that with the original's gameplay and Eidos could eclipse that great success .

Crimson Skies
FASA Interactive; Microsoft; *Late 2000*
www.fasainteractive.com

Originally penned as a computer game, this aerial combat board game got positive reviews at this year's GenCon and will now come out under Microsoft's tutelage.



Conquest: Frontier Wars
Digital Anvil; Microsoft; *Q2 2000*
www.digitalanvil.com

3D space-strategy simulator. *Homeworld*, beware: Bill Gates is on his way.

Crusaders of Might and Magic
3DO; 3DO; *Q4 99*
www.3do.com

You can never get enough fantasy, especially if it's a sequel to *Might and Magic*.

Dark Reign 2
Pandemic; Activision; *11/99*
www.activision.com

Sequel to the strategy favorite, featuring 3D infantry, 3D worlds, three and the letter D. ▶ p. 26

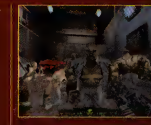
GAMES THAT HAVE BEEN IN DEVELOPMENT FOREVER

Perhaps they could be considered legendary for the amount of time it's taken for these games to see the light of day. Let's face it, you've heard of them all before – and eventually may actually get to play them.

Daikatana
Ion Storm; Eidos; *12/99*
www.ionstorm.com

DAI BY THE SWORD
There are some people – okay, actually there are, like, thousands of people – who'll swear that John Romero's looming first-person opus has survived thus far by hype alone. And those same people will swear that the sheer, gargantuan weight of that same, accumulating hype will be the thing that brings the already-ageing *Daikatana* down like a narcoleptic brontosaurus.

With four distinct eras/locales – near-future San Francisco, ancient Greece, medeival Norway, and far-future Japan – 24 single-player



levels and an AI-intensive side-kick/wingman scheme, the hubub is considerable ... but time is running out, not to mention the patience of faithful fans. The *Quake II* engine has already been succeeded by *Quake III*, and with a huge staff turnover too many cooks may have spoilt this broth. Still, the action is certainly intense, and the variety of weapons and monsters is very impressive. Whatever the case, we, like everyone out there, can't wait to find out if it's all been worth it.

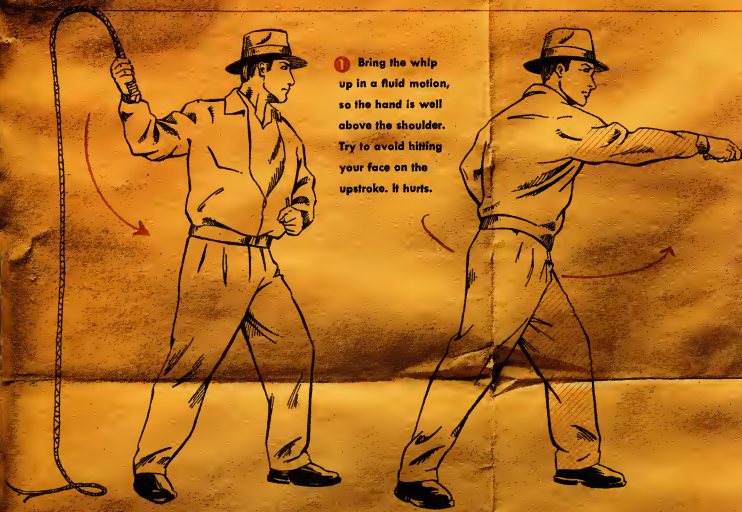
Duke Nukem Forever
3D Realms; GT Interactive; *5/2000*
www.3Drealms.com

"FOREVER" IS RIGHT, BABY!
The two-fisted, stogie-chompin', babe-savin', alien butt-kickin' male-oriented humor of the *Duke Nukem* universe – so un-PC at times that's it almost Mac – drew many of us into first-person shooters. Its environmental detail, excellent level design and constant flow of macho humor was unmatched at the time, and its originality has yet to be succeeded. Indeed, many players who might throw up their hands after nine levels of shooter stick with Duke just to reach the next environmental gag. Sadly, even having turned to the *Unreal* engine, The King may have fallen behind the technological curve of late, and Duke for the Millennium is long overdue.

Tenth Planet
Bethesda; Bethesda; *Haha*
www.bethsoft.com

A LEGEND IN ITS OWN OFFICE
We'll find the real 10th planet before this legendary game's on again/off again status is decided. After being shown at the first four E3 shows, It missed last year, but is allegedly still in the production cycle. This space combat sim was actually first due to ship in 1996!

HOW TO USE A BULLWHIP:



1 Bring the whip up in a fluid motion, so the hand is well above the shoulder. Try to avoid hitting your face on the upstroke. It hurts.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES:

5 Full-contact snake charming.

6 Emergency levitation.

7 Arthropod management.

He takes on snakes, traps, demons and commies. With

TEEN T ESRB
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LUCAS Arts

2 For optimum lashing, shift your weight from the right foot to the left. Focus on whatever you're trying to hit, grab or teach respect to.

3 Keep the wrist and hand at 12 o'clock.

4 To get a crisp gypsy crack, break your wrist and snap the hand up. Then stand back and survey the damage.

8 Relic snatching.

9 Commie weapons extraction.

INDIANA JONES and his INFERNAL MACHINE™

indy.lucasarts.com

For Windows 95/98

the fate of the world on the line, the whip gets one wicked workout. Indy's back.

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▶ p. 23

Dawn of Darkness
Ward Six; *Mid 2001*
www.dawnofdarkness.com

A fantasy setting for a commercial *Quake II* TC that will now be released as a stand-alone product.

Deep Fighter: The Tsunami Offensive
Criterion Studios; Ubi Soft; *Q1 2000*
www.ubisoft.com

Deep-sea adventure and fighting in a miniature sub by the makers of *Sub Culture*.

Demise
VB Designs; TBA; *TBA*
www.vbdesigns.com

Single- and multiplayer RPG that allows you to set up your own servers, a la *Quake*.

Demonstalkers II
Microforte; TBA; *Q1 2000*
www.microforte.com.au

Diablo/Gauntlet style fantasy shooter gameplay brought into a slick 3D world.

Descent 4
Volition; Interplay; *Q4 2000*
www.volition-inc.com

The next incarnation of this venerable series is likely to introduce characters to the universe, possibly mixing some on-foot action with the familiar flying. Naturally, navigating mammoth structures in a tiny craft will also feature heavily as the franchise retains its roots.

Destruction Derby 3
Psygnosis; Psygnosis; *Q2 2000*
www.psygnosis.com

New features include being able to customize your car and race in all-new "Crazy Tracks."

Deus Ex
Ion Storm; Eidos; *3/2000*
www.deusex.com

Warren Spector's action/RPG/adventure using the *Unreal* engine already looks phenomenal. Check out a major preview next month.

Diablo II
Blizzard; Blizzard; *Q1 2000*
www.blizzard.com

Four acts and five character classes liven up this sequel to the huge-selling action RPG.

Diac-Ra
Anarchy Arts; TBA; *TBA*
www.anarchy-arts.com

The creators of the *Legacy of the Fallen* add-on for *Shogo* are working on a new first-person shooter using an engine called the ROCgl from Bugg!

Die Hard Trilogy 2
n-Space; Fox Interactive; *11/99*
www.foxinteractive.com

This sequel features an original story, but the same three-part gameplay of 3D action/adventure, driving and a shooting gallery.

Dragon's Lair 3D
Dragonstone Studios; Blue Byte Software; *Q1 2001*
www.bluebyte.com

Arcade coin-op, cartoon 3D game by animator Don Bluth? Yep, stay tuned!

Duality
Double Aught; TBA; *TBA*
www.duality.net

Shooter with a story! Story with shooter! Mac and PC!

Dukes of Hazzard - Racing for Home
Engineering Animation; South-Peak Interactive; *1/2000*
www.southpeak.com

Mission-based racer that features all your Dukes of Hazzard favorites.

EA Sports 2001
EA Sports; EA Sports; *2000*
www.easports.com

Though details are sketchy about what features will make it in to the next iterations, you can be sure that *Madden*, *NHL*, *FIFA*, and *NBA Live 2001* are all in development.

Eden
Core Design; Eidos; *Q2 2000*
www.eidos.com

Little is known about Core's PC successor to the massive *Tomb Raider* franchise. What we do know is that it's an action adventure. It's rumored that it may be a graphical adventure with a cartoon flavor set in a fantasy world where every NPC is a character with whom you can interact. But that's just a rumor.

Elder Scrolls: Morrowind
Bethesda; Bethesda; *2001*
www.bethsoft.com

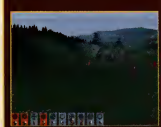
The third game in the Elder Scrolls RPG lineage (following *Arena* and *Daggerfall*), *Morrowind* is likely to be a more focused, but still huge game that builds on the extraordinary scope of *Daggerfall*.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

All the games that whetted the appetite, then disappeared without trace, only to resurface several months later with a revised quality level.

Beneath
Presto Studios; Activision; *TBA*
www.activision.com

A 3D adventure with some colorful graphics grabbed this game some attention, but the familiar gameplay may have consigned it to the permanent backburner. There's no mention of the game from the original publishers or developers.



Shogun: Total War
Creative Assembly; EA; *Q1 2000*
www.creative-assembly.co.uk

The feudal wars of Japan – yet another era and locale ripe for the, ah, digitization ... and *Shogun* promises mass-melee battles, renegade *ronin*, samurai valor and lakes will now be included in the landscapes. Let's hope it works out better than the melee battles in *Braveheart* did, ach.

10-Six
Segasoft; Segasoft; *Q1 2000*
www.10six.com

One million players in one game. The ambitious premise and internal "issues" consigned *10-Six* to several months of MIA status, only to quietly resurface as its *Magic: The Gathering*-style collectible "lode" system is fine-tuned for massively online multiplayer battling and trading.

Starship Troopers
Microprose; Hasbro; *Q2 2000*
www.hasbrointeractive.com

Bugs, Mr Rico! Zillions of 'em. For a while it was looking like the movie was as close as we were gonna get to the mobile-armor action of Robert Heinlein's square-jawed pulp classic, but *Starship Troopers* is back on track, the way it was meant to be. That means bulky powered-armor suits, long distance jet-assist jumps, a semi-freeform campaign involving both the "skinnies" and the "bugs," and detailed terrain that includes alien cities. No word yet on the inclusion of co-ed showers.

Number of games that sold less than 20,000 units in 1998: 3921 (source: PC Data) PC ACCELERATOR December 1999 http://www.pcxl.com
26 www.DailyRader.com

Eldorado
Totally Games; Activision; *2000*
www.totallygames.com

Realtime strategy games with a dash of adventure sees Totally depart from their Star Wars roots (they created *X-Wing Alliance* and its predecessors). This whole new series begins with this game set in the Age of Exploration (sound familiar to anyone?).

Enemy Infestation II
Microforte; TBA;*Q2 2000*
www.microforte.com.au

Yet another RTS bug-hunt, back on our home turf.

Evil Dead Ashes to Ashes
Heavy Iron Studios; THQ; *Q3 2000*
www.thq.com

Finally, the originator of the *Resident Evil*-style 3D horror adventure is licensed and will make its way to the PC. This new development team's credits include *Parasite Eve* for PSX. Of course, the famous shack will be used for the core story (to be okayed by director Sam Raimi) as well as outdoor areas in those spooky woods. Bruce Campbell (Ash from the movies) will be reprising his role, creating all-new lines to support the chainsaw carnage.

Evolva
Computer Artwork; TBA; *TBA*
No web

Whether this first-person squad-based action game ever sees the light of day is uncertain. Being closely likened to Devil's Thumb's *Unreal*-powered *Hired Guns* probably didn't help its chances of securing a publishing deal.

Fading Suns: Noble Armada
Holistic; Ripcord; *Q4 1999*
www.ripcordgames.com

3D RTS pitting four worlds against each other in a board game conversion from the Emperor of the Fading Suns table-top RPG setting.

Felony Pursuit
Polygon Studio of Paris; THQ; *Q1 2000*
www.thq.com

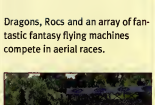
It's the future, and the traffic's horrible. Prepare to bust some criminals in a living, crowded metropolis.

Flight Combat: Thunder Over Europe
Looking Glass; TBA; *12/99*
www.fctoe.com

Combat flight sim featuring accurately rendered WWII scenery.

Flying Heroes
Illusion Softworks; Talonsoft; *Mid 2000*
www.talonsoft.com

Dragons, Rocs and an array of fantastic fantasy flying machines compete in aerial races.



Ford Racing
Empire; Empire; *Q1 2000*
www.empire-us.com

Empire has snagged the license and the full cooperation of the Ford Racing team (a prolific winner on the Nascar circuit) to ensure complete accuracy in this sim.

Formula 1 Championship
EA Sports; EA Sports; *12/99*
www.easports.com

Officially licensed and realistic, it will offer real teams and drivers.

Fox Hockey
Fox Interactive; Fox Interactive; *11/99*
www.foxinteractive.com

Fox Interactive gets into hockey with its new sports line.

Freelancer
Digital Anvil; Microsoft; *Late 2000*
www.digitalanvil.com

After blowing many people away at E3, Chris "Wing Commander" Roberts new game is another space saga, but features strong adventure elements and some great technology.

ALONE IN THE DARK 4
Infogrames; Fall 2000; www.infogrames.net

Galleon
Confounding Factor; Interplay; *Q2 2000*
www.confounding-factor.com

You play the role of Captain Rhama Sabrier, legendary mariner, charged with exploring a mysterious ship. This 3D action adventure from the creators of the original *Tomb Raider* has been in development for quite some time, but the latest screens look amazing.

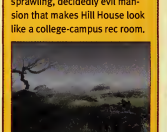
Gangsters game (no title)
Illusion Softworks; Talonsoft; *Mid 2000*
www.illusionsoftworks.com

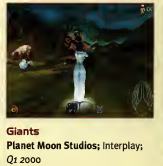
The Czech Republic-based *Hidden and Dangerous* developers are turning their insanity engine to the 1930s mob scene with a first- and third-person action/strategy game high on character interaction, and with plenty of leg breaking and sleeping with fishes.

Gangsters 2
Hothouse; Eidos; *Q3 2000*
www.eidos.com

An enhancement to the strategic gameplay of mob control.

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES
The original *Alone in the Dark* – one of the absolute coolest, creepiest titles for a game ever – was the dessicated old granddaddy that spawned the phenomenally successful *Resident Evil*. Even in its slightly surreal, low-poly debut, it was a revolutionary step that fused the atmosphere of a stark movie with the interaction of a game. *AITD4*, while radically jacked-up with accelerated high-res 3D graphics, realtime lighting effects and photo-quality textures, returns to its first-game roots with a sinister, Lovecraftian look and feel. The E3 demo gave us a taste the new atmosphere, complete with flashlight-illuminated tours of a sprawling, decidedly evil mansion that makes Hill House look like a college-campus rec room.





Giants
Planet Moon Studios; Interplay; *Q1 2000*
www.planetmoon.com

Oft-delayed, three-sided battle between drastically different races, by the makers of *MDK*. ▶ p.30

Look for Soldier of Fortune® this fall.
Screen shots courtesy of Raven Software.

The "KILL-ZONE" as seen by a standard 350 dpi mouse.

The "KILL-ZONE" as seen by the 1000 dpi Razer Boomslang.

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1.877.razerzone (1.877.729.3796)

▶ p. 27

Good & Evil
Cavedog; Cavedog; *Q2 2000*
www.cavedog.com

A fantasy-based realtime-strategy game. More details to come.

Gore
4D Rulers; TBA; *12/99*
www.4drulers.com

Despite a title that begs to grab mainstream headlines, Gore has yet to find a publisher, though it's approaching completion. This FPS spans three time periods – post-apocalyptic and medieval Earth, and an alien homeworld – and lets you interact with any NPC.

WarCraft III
Blizzard; Sierra; *Q2 2000*
www.blizzard.com

The textbook high-fantasy RTS is coming back again in full force, and it's a very tempting package, especially for veteran RTS gamers looking for a little more in the way of world-immersion than *StarCraft* or *Tiberian Sun* can offer. *WCIII* promises a radically interactive world that's almost as much RPG as real-time strategy: Wandering monsters, neutral townships, temples, quests, non-player characters, and different environmental effects. Six, count 'em, *six* different races to control flesh out the package, and authoring/editing tools can be used to tweak every aspect of gameplay from tile sets to special character abilities.

Ground Control
Massive Entertainment; Sierra; *Q1 2000*
www.sierrastudios.com

Formerly known as EA's *Colonial Marine*, Sierra snatched the rights to this sharp 3D RTS. An emphasis on the action instead of resource management is key.

Half-Life 2
Valve; Sierra; *2001*
www.valvesoftware.com

We know that it will be in development in the deepest, darkest heart of Valve – and that's a good thing. What form it will take, however, is anyone's guess.

Halo
Bungie; Bungie; *2000*
www.bungie.com

This third-person shooter was one of the most heralded games at E3. Jason Jones, the creator of *Marathon* and *Myth* is developing an engine that seems capable of anything. Though the exact gameplay details have yet to emerge, you'll be fighting on foot and driving loads of vehicles around some of the most realistic terrain ever.

Hand of Odd
Oddworld Inhabitants; TBA; *TBA*
www.oddworld.com

It's a strategy/resource sim gone odd – and both sides are out of their minds.

Harn Bloodline
Auran; TBA (poss. EA); *2000*
www.auran.com

The open table-top fantasy RPG Harn is getting the PC treatment using a technology called SAGE, created by the Australian-based original developers of *Dark Reign*.

Heavy Metal: FAKK2
Ritual; god; *2/2000*
www.ritual.com

The animated movie of Kevin Eastman's comic book creation hits movie theaters later this year, followed by the third-person action game powered by the *Q3A* engine.

Hidden and Dangerous 2
Illusion Softworks; Talonsoft; *Late 2000*
www.illusionsoftworks.com

The sequel aims to build on great mission structure and some fine effects in the original squad-based action/strategy game.

Hired Guns
Devil's Thumb Entertainment; Psygnosis; *Q1 2000*
www.psygnosis.com

First-person remake of the classic Amiga squad-based shooter, using the *Unreal* engine.

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
The Digital Village; PAN Interactive; *Q3 2001*
www.tdv.com

Finally, there's news of a whole new game of the fantastic Douglas Adams books. Dubbed as a 3D action/adventure in the mold of *Tomb Raider* and *Mario 64*, this project has just started and won't near completion 'til 2001 soonest.

Hitman
IO Interactive; Eidos; *Q2 2000*
www.eidos.com

A thinking man's shooter, where you combine stealth and firepower while insisting it's just a job.

Hostile Waters
Rage Software; *Q1 2000*
www.rage.co.uk

A 3D accelerated version of the classic *Carrier Command*.

In Cold Blood
Revolution; *2000*
www.revolution.co.uk

The company that created the *Broken Sword* 2D graphic adventures is entering the action/adventure market with this title, yet to be signed. The company has also confirmed working on *Broken Sword 3*.

Interstate '82
Activision; Activision; *11/99*
www.activision.com

Forget the funk – this sequel to the racing/combat game will have you breaking and cold-shaking enemies in the glorious '80s.

JJ Longfellow: A 70s Adventure
Creative Extremes; Big Afro; *12/99*
www.extremes.co.nz

Set in 1972 you're a hip police detective, where organized crime is the enemy, dig? Oh yes, this is real, though may not appear here!

Kickflip
Majorcorp; Majorcorp; *12/99*
www.kickflip.net

A skateboarding sim that's going to be released free to the public, paid for by sponsorship from skating companies. It features seven riders (five guys, two chicks) who tear up 13 different levels. You can also create your own skater, complete with the hippest gear from major companies.

KISS: Psycho Circus
Third Law Interactive; g.o.d.; *Q1 2000*
www.thirdlaw.com

KISS always walked the line between musicians and superheroes, and now they've jumped over the line with both feet.

Legend of the Blade Masters
Ronin; Ripcord; *1/2000*
www.blademasters.com

3D RPG with dragons, swords, magic and high adventure.

Loose Cannon
Digital Anvil; Microsoft; *Q2 2000*
www.digitalanvil.com

Stop a major criminal syndicate with the weapon you know best: Your car.

Max Payne
3D Realms/Remedy; g.o.d.; *Q2 2000*
www.3drealms.com

Third-person shooter with Hong Kong-movie sensibilities.

Messiah
Shiny; Interplay; *11/99*
www.shiny.com

Play a cherub with the power to possess numerous other characters in this odd action game.

Metal Fatigue
Zono Studios; Psygnosis; *12/99*
www.psygnosis.com

Pilot ComBots into some heavy realtime strategy combat. Delays in development should have fixed some confusing control schemes.

Middle-Earth
Sierra Studios; *Late 2000*
www.middle-earth.com

As massively multiplayer worlds go, Tolkien's spellbinding setting has to be the most anticipated. But don't be surprised if it slips beyond 2000.

Mortyr
Mirage Media; TBA; *TBA*
www.mortyr.net

This promising WWII FPS (likened to an updated *Wolfenstein*) got canned by new publishers Ubi Soft after their purchase of Interactive Magic's product line-up (the fools). It's since scored a European publisher (HD Interactive) but has yet to be greenlighted in the US. Still, try out the demo at least for what looks to be a really entertaining little shooter.

Motocross Madness 2
Rainbow Studios; Microsoft; *Q1 2000*
www.microsoft.com/games

The sequel to the madcap motocross racer sports even more detailed bikes and scenery and more spectacular stunts and spills.

Munch's Oddysee
Oddworld Inhabitants; TBA; *TBA*
www.oddworld.com

The bad news is, it's animal testing ... the worse news is, you're the animal ... Odd's continuing journey may not make it to the PC due to GT's problems, though the environments are amazing.

Navy SEALS
Oakhurst; Codemasters; *Q3 2000*
www.codemasters.com

This *Unreal*-engine squad-based 3D action game is resurrected back at its original starting point in Oakhurst, at the offices formerly known as Yosemite. Control Navy SEALS behind enemy lines in detailed squad missions.

WHEN THE GOOD DON'T DIE YOUNG

Among the games currently in development there is a vast number that never found their way through the meandering fortune of company ideals, budgets and gamer passions. Here are a few high profile corpses ...

WarCraft Adventures
Blizzard; Sierra

DORKS: NO ORCS ...?
Fans of the classic high-fantasy realtime strategy game were drooling at the prospect of a hand-animated adventure game set in the *WarCraft* cosmos ... but alas, it is not to be. Word has is that some of the materials will be introduced as cinematics in the forthcoming *WarCraft III* – hmm, come to think of it, this should probably be in the Rumors boxout ...

Prey
3D Realms; GT Interactive

PORTAL, PORTAL ON THE WALL
A cutting-edge first-person shooter with a mind-twisting "portal" system – two-dimensional rifts in space would allow you to step through into other, distant rooms, or rooms bigger than the current "enclosing" space – the mind boggled just thinking of the possibilities. And if that was happening to observers, what was going through the minds of the technology creators ... ? And hence it's on indefinite hold.

Babylon 5: Combat Simulator
Yosemite; Sierra

LOST IN HYPERSPACE
A real 3D, roll-pitch-yaw space combat simulator that effectively portrayed how big the popular TV series spaceships and bases really were. First Yosemite Entertainment got the axe, and the B5 project was moved up to Sierra along with many of the original workforce. Then the plug was pulled. No, we don't understand it either.

Star Trek: New Worlds
14 Degrees East; Interplay

IT'S JUST WRONG
Despite the fact that the 3D, *Battlezone*-esque engine of *New Worlds* looked pretty cool, the idea of crude, ground-force engagements in the Trek universe just seemed a little ... cheesy. We're not sure that had anything to do with the disappearance of this title – but we can hope.

Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury
Interplay

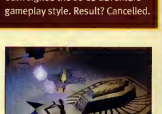
GOOD TREK MEETS BAD TECH
A classic Trek-era adventure-style game, original series writer DC Fontana was called in to do story work. Unfortunately, the ambitious facial movement and lip-syncing technology would have outweighed the so-so adventure gameplay style. Result? Cancelled.

NBA Basketball 2000
Fox Interactive; *Q2 2000*
www.foxsports.com

As regular as clockwork, Fox is determined to ensure that it uses its TV-style presentation and format to full effect in the sterling effort to make in-roads on EA Sports' dominance.

Need for Speed: Motor City
EA; EA; *Mid 2000*
www.ea.com

An online racing game that also offers the chance to be a virtual used car salesman. This racer will use elements from the huge *Need for Speed* series (such as the gorgeous graphics engine), and also create a full economic system as muscle cars are raced and smashed for cash.



Neverwinter Nights
Bioware; Interplay; *Q4 2000*
www.neverwinternights.com

Big-ass AD&D-based online RPG where you get to create your own world servers to bring classic DMing to the PC.

NFL Blitz 2000
Midway; Midway; *12/99*
www.midway.com

Bone-crunching NFL-esque action, like the arcade game. ▶ p. 34

CORE
In ancient Egypt, it was common practice to have your internal organs removed and your brain pulled out through your nose.
Of course ancient Egyptians were lucky enough to be dead first.
PlayStation
TEEN
ESRB
PC CD

Could the next tomb Lara Croft enters be her own? Find out in Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, her latest adventure. With seamlessly integrated gameplay and FMV sequences, new skin and 3-D texture mapping, diabolical new puzzles and a totally new inventory control system this is a totally new Tomb Raider. Let's just hope it's not Lara's last.

TOMB RAIDER THE LAST REVELATION

tombraider.com

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411 - Product Number 130

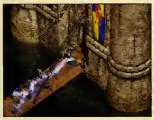
▶ p. 31

NFL Fever 2001
Microsoft; Microsoft; *Q3 2000*
www.microsoft.com

No doubt the second installment of this promising new franchise will add some stat details and a more solid management aspect. So long as they also keep improving the already solid gameplay, this is the sports series to watch on the PC.

No One Lives Forever [TBA]
Monolith; Fox Interactive; *Q2 2000*
www.foxinteractive.com

This first-person action game has gone through a few design changes. Its final format will feature a female lead character bearing no resemblance to a fairer sex version of James Bond. Okay?



Nox
Westwood; Westwood; *11/99*
www.westwood.com

Top-down, fast-action *Diablo*-like RPG set in the fantasy realm of Nox. New features include impressive lighting effects and trap use.

Odium
Metropolis; Monolith Productions; *12/99*
www.lith.com

Previously known as *Gorky 17*, this militaristic strategy game focuses on a three-person party.

Off Road Racing
Rage Software; *12/99*
www.rage.co.uk

One of the UK's brightest development houses (particularly for graphic effects, as evidenced by *Incoming* and *Expendable*) is turning its attention to racing with wild buggies and wilder tracks.

Olympics 2000
ISM; Eidos; *Summer 2000*
www.eidos.com

The license for games based on the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Olympics, plus the 2002 winter Olympics are tied up in Eidos' comprehensive deal.

Omikron
Quantic Dream; Eidos; *11/99*
www.quanticdream.com

Blade Runner meets *Tomb Raider*. Fight for your soul in an immense futuristic city with Bowie music.

Oni
Bungie; Bungie; *12/99*
www.bungie.com

Third-person action/adventure that features anime-inspired action. Konoko, the female lead character uncovers police corruption and kicks ass. Potentially the best fighting game on the PC.

Oxford
Timeline Studios; Eidos; *Q3 2000*
www.timelinestudios.com

Michael Crichton's development house are finishing their game engine to power a range of titles with probable links to his world famous properties.

Pilgrim
Infogrames; *TBA*
www.infogrames.net

Medieval RPG with graphics by famous French comic artist Moebius. Y'know, *Moebius*.

Plague
Asylum; TBA
www.asylum-entertainment.com

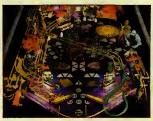
Wargame set in medieval times, with 3D building and structures.

Planescape: Torment
Black Isle; Interplay; *12/99*
www.planescape-torment.com

The Planescape pen-and-paper series gets behind the *Baldur's Gate* engine and hopes to capitalize on the resurgence in story-based RPGs.

Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor
SSI/Stormfront; Mindscape; *Q3 2000*
www.ssionline.com

Follow-up to the *Pool of Radiance* series, which has taken a long, long hiatus.



Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey
Empire; Empire; *12/99*
www.empire-us.com

For any fan of pinball, the *Pro Pinball* series is the pinnacle of the hobby on the PC. The physics engine is leaps and bounds beyond the closest competition and with the Jules Verne fantasy adventure-inspired table, the gap is likely to widen still further.

Project IGI
Innerloop; Eidos; *Summer 2000*
www.eidos.com

Military sim-style action game with bags of graphical style. ▶ p. 37

R U M O R S

We heard it on the grapevine, and in the spirit of completeness, here are a couple you might not have heard of so far.

To be named
Gas Powered Games; Microsoft; *Late 2000*
www.microsoft.com

Chris "Total Annihilation" Taylor has been in hibernation plotting what's rumored to be an RPG. More details by the year's end.

Name to be determined
Running With Scissors; TBA; *TBA*
www.runningwithscissors.com

Details are sketchy, but the questionable element in the online gaming universe is already a-rumble about a massively multiplayer game specializing in player clans or cartels engaging in turf wars, protection rackets, and all the other things that make, erm, unauthorized activity sound so cool. That should suffice until our sources tell us more.

James Bond game
EA; EA; *TBA*
www.ea.com

It's long been rumored that EA is working on a James Bond-licensed game using the *Quake III* engine. Official word may be released with the new movie in November.

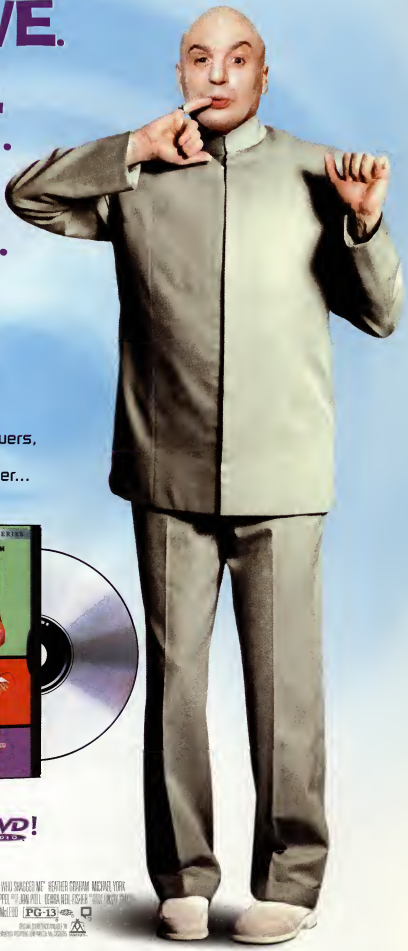
Tim Schaeffer adventure
LucasArts; LucasArts; *TBA*
www.lucasarts.com

The creator of the classic *Monkey Island* games is working on a yet-to-be-announced project. It's happening, but what form or style it takes is anyone's guess.

Daikatana 2
Ion Storm; TBA; *TBA*
www.ionstorm.com

It's supposed to be using the *Unreal* (or *Unreal 2*) engine. Beyond that, nothing is known.

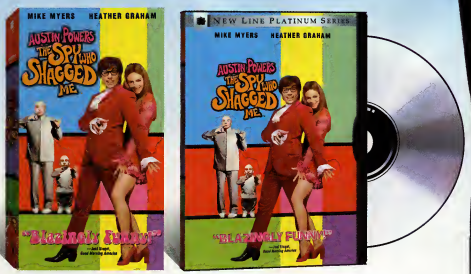
EXECUTIVE. SINGLE PARENT. EVIL GENIUS.



name DR. EVIL

profession Evil genius.
Head of worldwide evil empire.

mission Destroy Austin Powers, rule the world and make one million...er... 100 billion dollars.



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Quake III: Arena
Id Software; Activision; *12/99*
www.quake3arena.com

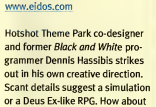
You need to ask what it's about?

Real Neverending Story
Discreet Monsters; TBA; *4/2000*
www.discreetmonsters.com

Based on Michael Ende's Neverending Story book, this 3D adventure is being developed in Germany with US distribution TBD.

Republic: The Revolution
Elixir Studios; Eidos; *Fall 2000*
www.eidos.com

Hotshot Theme Park co-designer and former *Black and White* programmer Dennis Hassibis strikes out in his own creative direction. Scant details suggest a simulation or a Deus Ex-like RPG. How about a real-world RPG simulation?

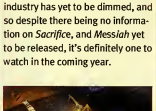


Rising Sun
Talonsoft; Talonsoft; *1/2000*
www.talonsoft.com

Set in 1941 where you have the chance to orchestrate every conceivable angle of the taking of Iwo Jima in a turn-based strategy from the East/West Front series.

Sacrifice
Shiny; *2000*
www.sacrifice.net

Shiny's reputation as one of the most creative developers in the industry has yet to be dimmed, and so despite there being no information on *Sacrifice*, and *Messiah* yet to be released, it's definitely one to watch in the coming year.



Sanity
Monolith; Monolith; *11/99*
www.lith.com

Third-person shooter using psionics and a new "spell-casting" system with which you can customize spells and attacks.

SCCA Can-Am
Motorsims; Motorsims; *Q1 2000*
www.motorsims.com

Racing simulation based on the Can-Am endurance races.

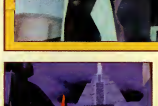
Silent Hunter II
SSI; SSI; *12/99*
www.ssionline.com

Sequel to the hyper-detailed submarine simulator.

Sim Theme Park
Bullfrog; Electronic Arts; *12/99*
www.simthemepark.com

Theme Park goes full 3D, and enables you to ride every ride in first-person. Given the success of *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, this is likely to clean up in the sales charts.

Planet of the Apes
Visiware Studios; Fox Interactive; *Q2 2000;* www.foxinteractive.com

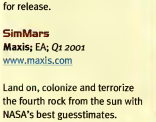


Simon the Sorcerer 3D
Adventuresoft; SouthPeak; *Q1 2000*
www.adventuresoft.com

Simon the who? Back in the day (in England) *Simon the Sorcerer* challenged LucasArts' *Monkey Island* games, as well as Psygnosis' *Discworld* cartoon style graphic adventures. Now a third installment with *Grim Fandango*-esque 3D characters is readying for release.

SimMars
Maxis; EA; *Q1 2001*
www.maxis.com

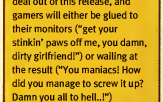
Land on, colonize and terrorize the fourth rock from the sun with NASA's best guesstimates.



Slave Zero
Accolade; Infogrames; *11/99*
www.slavezero.com

Giant mechs cause mayhem in a city full of moving cars, blimps, and, of course, squashable people. All-out action in stunning settings is the name of the game.

MONKEY SEE, MONKEY KILL
It's hard to look at this game license and not instinctively think, with much offense, "But we already know the ending!" Still, it's based on one of the most recognizable franchises in movie history. In this epic adventure game, you play (surprise, surprise) the sole human survivor who has crash-landed a spaceship on an, ahem, uncharted planet 1,000 years into the future. One thing's a fair bet: Fox is making a pretty big deal out of this release, and gamers will either be glued to their monitors ("get your stinkin' paws off me, you damn, dirty girlfriend!") or wailing at the result ("You maniacs! How did you manage to screw it up? Damn you all to hell..!")



Soldier
Gigawatt Studios; SouthPeak Interactive; *TBA*
www.southpeak.com

Game based on the 1998 film. Can we expect shooting and explosions? Oh yes, we can.

Soldier of Fortune
Raven; Activision; *Q1 2000*
www.ravensoft.com

Welcome to the most violent game ever. This shooter using a heavily modified version of the *Quake II* engine, makes *Kingpin* look like cotton candy with sprinkles. ▶ p. 39

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▶ p. 37

South Park Rally
Acclaim; Acclaim; *12/99*
www.acclaimnation.com

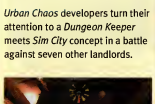
Race around South Park, Big Gay Al's Big Gay Animal Sanctuary and others in this *Mario*-esque racer that stretches the limits of the original shooter engine.

Sovereign
Verant; 989 Studios; *Q2 2000*
www.verant.com

A massively multiplayer persistent world RTS is quite a concept. Check out Online Arena for more information.

Space Station
Mucky Foot; Eidos; *Fall 2000*
www.eidos.com

Urban Chaos developers turn their attention to a *Dungeon Keeper* meets *Sim City* concept in a battle against seven other landlords.



Starlancer
Digital Anvil; Microsoft; *Q1 2000*
www.digitalanvil.com

First-person space combat with over 80 ships to choose from.

Steel Panthers IV
SSI; SSI; *12/99*
www.ssionline.com

The historical military-strategy series reaches its fourth installment.

Summoner
Volition; THQ; *Q2 2000*
www.summoner.com

Taking a break from their *Descent* franchise, Volition is working on a RPG with a rich, epic plot.

SWAT 3: Close-Quarters Battle
Sierra Northwest; Sierra Studios; *12/99*
www.sierrastudios.com

The *SWAT* series takes a turn with a new installment – this time in first-person 3D.

Tachyon: The Fringe
Novalogic; Novalogic; *12/99*
www.novalogic.com

Bruce (Ash) Campbell supplies the voice of lead character Jake Logan in this impressive looking space combat game. In a crowded market it still has the potential to shine with some sparkling space effects and Campbell's intense voiceover work.

Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms
Valve; Sierra Studios; *Q3 2000*
www.teamfortress.com

From the makers of *Half-Life* comes a team-based online action game in which you can select from 12 character classes. One of the hottest games of 2000, it's been delayed numerous times to get the detailed gamplay balance perfected. A Game of 2000 candidate.

Test Drive 6
Infogrames; Infogrames; *11/99*
www.td6.com

The *Test Drive* franchise gets a new paint job in the continuing sports car racing franchise.

Sheep
Mind's Eye; Empire; *Q2 2000*; www.empire-us.com

Test Drive Cycles
Accolade; Infogrames; *Q1 2000*
www.infogrames.net

Race some of the best licensed cycles on over 24 tracks.

Test Drive Off-Road 3
Accolade; Infogrames; *11/99*
www.infogrames.net

Vehicles can be modified and tracks now branch in this newest installment of off-road racing.

Theocracy
Philos Labs; Ubi Soft; *TBA*
www.ubisoft.com

A war of words between original publishers Interactive Magic and Hungarian developers, Philos Labs caused hilarity for the industry. The upshot is that this Aztec-based strategy game has finally found a publisher.

The Settlers IV
Blue Byte; Blue Byte; *Q4 2000*
www.bluebyte.com

Not surprising that this huge European hit spawns yet another sequel, promising new races, new graphics and a deep unfolding story. Question is, will it have more up front than the *Quest for the Amazons* expansion pack recently released for version III?

The Sims
Maxis; Electronic Arts; *2/2000*
www.simcity.com/thesims/

SC creator Will Wright lets you guide the lives, loves, careers, and interests of a group of simpeople. Keeping them happy is likely to be tougher than working out the *SC3K* water supply.

WHAT THE FLOCK?
Aiming to recreate the addictive pull of the classic *Lemmings*, *Sheep* features all-new AS (Artificial Stupidity) to recreate accurately the unique crapness of sheep. The object for the four herders is to get a set number of their flock to the exit without them being sliced and diced on numerous obstacles. In these levels, the sheep negligently risk their fleeced hides by wandering in to all manner of obstacles such as electric fences, and ice cream makers (that's right).

Call it that quirky Brit humor, but *Sheep* is all on its own in the originality stakes, and if it manages to capture any of that crazy addictive quality that *Lemmings* mastered (especially since *Lemmings Revolution* was canned) it could well be a dark horse for big things. You'll be able to use various implements and also sound to control the sheep. Yell at them and they'll run away.

The sixteen levels can be accessed through different exits, following a branching path to the final Temple of Loom level. Along the way tough decisions need to be made as any of the cute little creatures may need to be sacrificed for the greater good of the herd.

Stories of months spent in fields by the development team, researching the behavior of the sheep, is an issue that **PCXL** refuses to investigate further.

Rune
Human Head Studios; g.o.d; *Summer 2000;* www.humanhead.com

TO THE DEPTHS OF VALHALLA
A third-person action game with a story steeped in Nordic myth and powered by the *Unreal 2* engine – that's right ... *Unreal 2*. The game will focus on melee combat with a range of swords, axes and clubs to be used by lead character Ragnar on the numerous humanoid and legendary enemies.

Skulking around the shadows of the dank dungeon environments will be as important as the ability to cleave heads. Human Head has implemented a sound tool within the *Unreal* engine to allow for the creation of creepy 3D effects. Backed by graphical effects such as a new shadowing system, *Rune* should have bucket loads of atmosphere. You'll also be able to use the severed limbs of enemies as weapons, and that's always a plus point.

Thief II: The Metal Age
Looking Glass Studios; Eidos; *Q4 2000*
www.lglass.com

Garrett's back, with improved AI, 16-bit texturing, and all-new sneaking adventure.

Third World
Redline Games; *TBA*
www.redlinegames.com

Realtime squad-based strategy with some RPG elements and a sprinkle of character development.

Treachery
Microforte; *Q2 2000*
www.microforte.com.au

Plot, scheme, and build in 1000-player internet strategy action.

Titanium Angels
SCi; *Q4 2000*
www.sci.co.uk

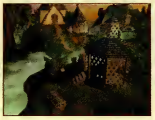
Two characters allow a mix of first- and third-person action in a dark adventure set in the future.

Tread Marks
Longbow Digital Arts; Longbow Digital Arts; *12/99*
www.longbowdigitalarts.com

Kids, tanks can kill. But can they race? You'll soon find out.

Unreal 2
Legend Entertainment; Epic Games; *2000*
www.epicgames.com

Unreal Tournament's release has ensured that the network code will be stable for when *Wheel of Time* developers Legend get full steam ahead on the core game. Little has been revealed thus far about the game's format, and whether it will continue the same plot line. Whatever, the battle with the *Quake III* engine for the best looks in the industry is white hot.



Ultima: Ascension
Origin; EA; *12/99*
www.ultimaascension.com

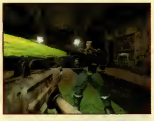
Lord British decrees all-3D environments for this ninth installment that ends one branch of the epic tale of the Avatar.

Ultima Online 2
Origin; EA; *Late 2000*
www.origin.ea.com

Britannia will rule the internet waves again. Origin's internet strategy will see them enhance the graphic effects (possibly using the *Ultima Ascension* game engine) as well as opening up a vast amount more functionality.

Ultimate Golf
Vertex Multimedia; Ubi Soft; *Q2 2000*
www.ubisoft.com

3D golf puts the genre into a full polygonal perspective.



Unreal Tournament
Epic Games; GT Interactive; *11/99*
www.unrealtournament.com

A stand-alone multiplayer tournament with different modes of play. With incredible detail in the textures and some inspired level design (like the *Saving Private Ryan* variant), *UT* will give *Q3A* a run for its online money.

Tzar: Burden of the Crown
Haemimont Multimedia; Talonsoft; *2/2000*
www.talonsoft.com

A blend of magic and history from Bulgarian developers sees this RTS feature some colorful graphics as three empires (European, Arabic and Asian) battle on land, sea and air.

Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption
Nihilistic; Activision; *12/99*
www.nihilistic.com

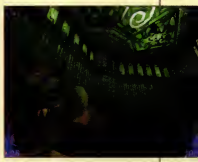
The White Wolf license gets one of the closest recreations of table top roleplaying yet seen on a PC.

Wargamer: Napolean 1813
Empire; Empire; *12/1999*
www.empire-us.com

Who would you rather be? The diminuitive leader who lost an empire or the commander who tore down his forces? Try both sides of the historical coin in this turn-based strategy.

Wartorn
Eyst; TBA; *12/99*
www.wartorn.com

A 3D RTS that's been in development for over two years and is still seeking a publisher ...



Werewolf: The Heart of Gaia
DreamForge; ASC Games; *Q1 2000*
www.dreamforge.com

After questions about the project being completed, it seems that *Werewolf* is back on track after undergoing some changes to the *Unreal*-engine powered gameplay. The morphing style provides three gameplay options in human, werewolf and wolf's clothing.

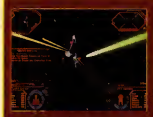
Or, "Would you like to get fries with that, sir?" Top developers of the major franchises always have something up their sleeve to extend the business. Here's what we know about the biggies.

Command & Conquer: Renegade

Westwood; EA; *Late 2000*
www.westwood.com

I GOT A PRESENT FOR YA!
Easily the most popular and recognized "universe" of land-based realtime strategy games, *Renegade* gives you the chance personally to fill the boots of the most beloved *C&C* character, the Commando. It's third-person, but don't call it *Tomb Commando* – stealth and tactics rule here, as do the vehicles you get to drive. And the only "platforms" you'll find are ones with big, expensive vehicles sitting on them, waiting for a wad of C-4 and a wisecrack.

THE STAR TREK UNIVERSE



Star Trek: Klingon Academy

14 Degrees East; Interplay; *12/99*
www.interplay.com

PUTTING THE SMACK DOWN ... AND ALL AROUND
After years of missteps and false starts, the Star Trek combat-sim is finally taking authentic sluggish, naval 3D steps in the direction of film-inspired battles like those epic conflicts in *The Wrath of Khan* and *The Undiscovered Country*.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: The Fallen

The Collective; S&S Interactive; *Q1 2000*
www.collectivestudios.com

PRETTY FLY (FOR A FED GUY)
Some would say it's one of the first real "games" S&S will have published, and what a way to start: A thorough follow-cam thinking-person's shooter based on the gorgeous *Unreal* engine – not too shabby.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

Raven Software; Activision; *Q1 2000*
www.ravensoft.com

FPS THE JANE-WAY (SORRY, WE HAD TO)
Voyager takes on the *Quake III* engine and in one fell swoop gets more attitude than the show ever had. You're a "Hazard Team" commando infiltrating enemy ships, shooting up Borg and proving that real men don't set for "stun."

Star Trek: Armada

Activision; Activision; *Q1 2000*
www.activision.com

D-7: YOU DECOMPRESSED MY BATTLESHIP
It's been too long coming – a realtime strategy game set in the Star Trek universe (especially since *New Worlds* seems to have perished). Command Federation, Klingon, Romulan and even Borg spacestations and starships in a campaign for galactic conquest.

Star Trek: Hidden Evil

Presto Studios; Activision; *Late 1999*
www.prestostudios.com

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE INSURRECTION?
Since the movie that inspired this story is long gone, the link has been removed and a new title emerged. It's a third-person graphic adventure with the idea of thrusting you immersively in to the role of a young Starfleet officer. Congratulations, cadet, you're going to save the world ... again.

Star Trek: DS9: Dominion Wars

The Collective; S&S Interactive; *Mid 2000*
www.collectivestudios.com

WHEN YOU'VE GOT A GOOD THING GOING ...
The Collective have yet to finish the first game, but they're already on the ball with a game that introduces the great lynchpin Dominion clash from the DS9 series.

THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE

Star Wars: Force Commander

Ronin Entertainment; LucasArts; *12/1999*
www.lucasarts.com

REBEL, YOUR BASE IS A MESS
Another anticipated hadda-happen title – immersive 3D ground combat in the Star Wars universe! Walkers and turrets and cables, oh my! Help you they will, yes!

Episode I: Obi-Wan

LucasArts; LucasArts; *Mid 2000*
www.lucasarts.com

"IF YOU STRIKE ME DOWN ..."
At the very least, a chance to make up for the "strike one" of the so-so adventure *The Phantom Menace*. Essentially a follow-up to *Jedi Knight*, it was a must-have game as soon as it was announced.

Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411:** Product Number 120

Wheel of Time
Legend Entertainment; GT Interactive; *11/99*
www.wheeloftime.com

Realtime 3D action/strategy game based on Robert Jordan's acclaimed novels.

Wild Wild West: The Steel Assassin
SouthPeak; SouthPeak; *11/99*
www.southpeak.com

Third-person adventure game based on the movie, but with an original story (unlike movie).

Wizardry 8
Sir-tech; *Late 2000*
www.wizardry8.com

After months of silence Sir-tech seems to be back on the ball with the latest in their long-awaited classic RPG series. Still without a publisher, and due date, the long established history of this franchise elevates its status despite a several year hiatus. A hardcore group of fans will be waiting with baited breath for any new info.

Worlds Ablaze
Auran; TBA; *TBA*
www.auran.com

Change the course of WWII history, controlling some major events of the war with up to 15 other players in multiplayer.

World Sports Car 2000
Empire; Empire; *Q1 2000*
www.empire-us.com

Is this Le Mans? Racing any of 12 cars, each sporting panel-specific modeling to warp and bend with all the crashes, *WSC* will cover a whole bunch of tracks from around the world in great detail.

X-COM Alliance
Microprose; Hasbro; *2000*
www.microprose.com

Little has been heard of this first-person squad-based action game using the *Unreal* engine. It was certainly promising, with the depth and intrigue of the *X-COM* universe providing a fascinating backdrop to missions requiring incredible team AI, tactical maneuvering and strategic planning.

Xenocide
Microforte; *Q1 2000*
www.microforte.com.au

A sci-fi epic of humans against an alien plague – bets, anyone?

GAMES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

It's amazing that among these hundreds of games there are still ideas that we'd like implementing that have yet to see the development green light.

High Noon
Six Shooter Studios; TBA; *TBA*
www.six-shooter.com

DYIN' AIN'T MUCH OF A LIVIN'
Ask the rabid PC gamer how many good, solid titles have been based on the Old West, and you'll get an instant reply of "*Outlaws!*" or else a long, blank stare. It's a crime, a shame and a wasteland out there as far as the digital armchair gunslinger's options are concerned, but High Noon promises to bring true 3D shooter/adventure action to the stark, desolate and yet somehow romantic "spaghetti western"... if the title ever sees the light of day, that is.

Waco: The Final Days
Olive "Branch" Productions; TBA; *TBA*
www.[makeoneup].com

HOME ON THE (FIRING) RANGE
Here's a realtime strategy game in the style of *C&C* but with a lethal twist: One side cannot do anything but hold out as long as possible against an inevitable, overwhelming military defeat, and the other side cannot possibly win and survive the inevitable backlash. Both sides command a variety of well-balanced units including tanks, children, shotguns, women, neurotoxins, teddy bears, incendiary rounds, kerosene, ATF squads, satellites and fire extinguishers. An in-game chat feature allows federal forces to feed soothing lies to beleagured defenders until heavy assault forces move into final, oppressive position.

Half-Truth: Opposing Stories
Stick Willy Studios; TBA; *TBA*
www.slick-william.com

I'M JUST A BILL
This first-person "shooter" puts players in pursuit of interns, secretaries and skanky trailer-babes on a search-and-deflower mission through the halls of the White House, the offices of the Pentagon, and the aisles of clothing and cigar stores without number. A specialized Skill scheme allows players to tap phone lines, alter documents and conduct DNA research and/or complex verbal sidesteps. It's a race against constant pursuit by the Republican Council. You don't even want to know about the weapons.

WANT TO WORK AT PC ACCELERATOR?

ENJOY THE JET-SETTING, BABE-GETTING, BEER-DRINKING LIFE OF A PCXL EDITOR JUST BY VOTING FOR THE GAME YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON. IT'S THAT EASY! NO PURCHASE NECESSARY! BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED! GUARANTEED! NEW AND IMPROVED! ETC.

We need your help. With 201 games to choose from we just can't decide which one to chase down for a full-blown preview. Diligently study the "BMFL 2K" and find the game that most piques your interest. Now, run quickly and send off an email to thisgameyoufoos@pcxl.com and state the one game you want more on. Once we get your votes (deadline of Jan. 15th – and you can't miss your deadlines like we do ours) we'll add them up with some sort of supercomputer and give the winning game to the law firm Boywee, Faaked, Emme & Howe. Next, we'll take all of the people who voted for the winning game and throw their names in Hector's decaying skull (we like to keep mementos, you know) and pull out a grand prize winner.

The winner will be flown to the development offices of the winning game with a likely inebriated PCXL editor. The winner and staffer will ask the tough questions, play the game, see how it is made, hit on cute (female) artists, and together they'll craft an epic piece of journalism. The winning preview will then appear in a later issue. What are you waiting for? Be a PCXL bigshot and decide what game we cover, then fly down and do it yourself.

CONTEST RULES

No purchase is necessary to win. Entries must be received no later than January 15th, 2000. The winner will be chosen on or about January 17th, 2000 and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. Imagine cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries. The prize is nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Imagine shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and no alternate winner will be selected. The winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winner agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Imagine is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received. Void in Rhode Island, Puerto Rico and where prohibited by law.

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e-mail:_____

Age:_____ Date of Birth:_____

Phone Number:_____

Preferred Game:_____

Mail entries to: I want to work at PCXL,
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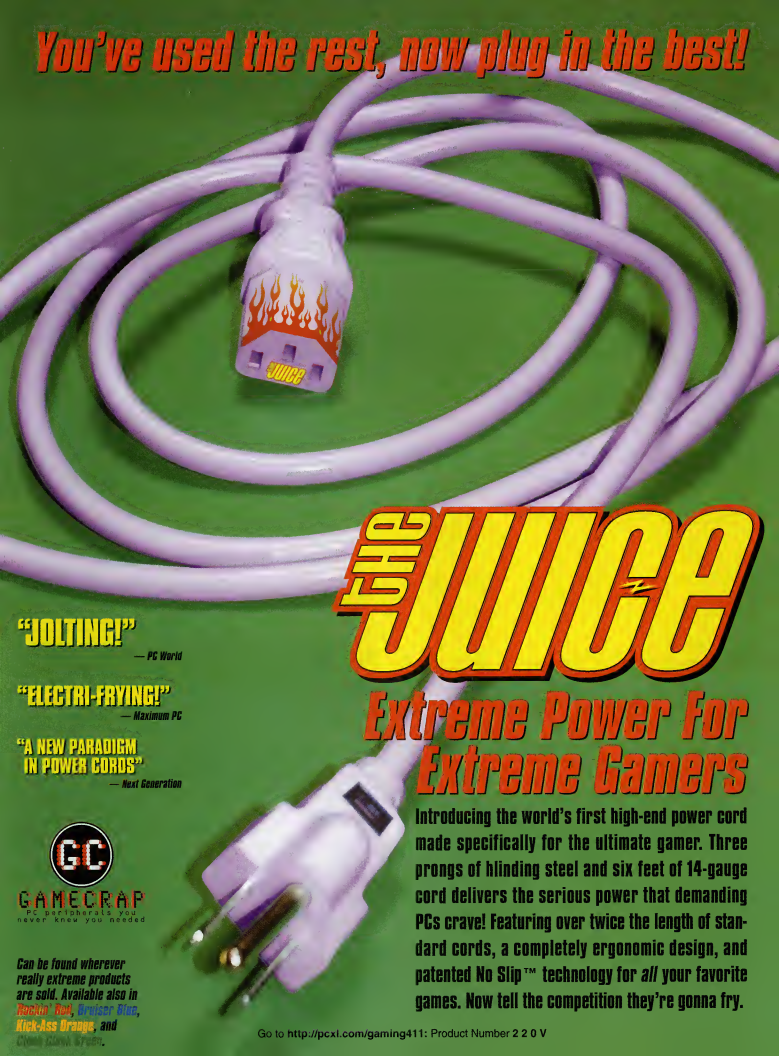
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-Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

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REFLECTIONS

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GT Interactive Software

www.gtgames.com

98 of Christmas

Been good this year? Bad? Downright nasty? Tired of spending your life looking over your shoulder lest some morbidly obese man in a crimson and white fur-trimmed jumpsuit catches you doing something you shouldn't? None of that matters, because whatever side of the equation you come out on, PCXL has a hot gift for you. One can be burnt for energy while the other ... well, we're getting ahead of ourselves, aren't we? It's Christmas and rampant consumerism has brought us to this: The gift guide. But this isn't just any collection of random trinkets you could never afford without selling a kidney. Just as all life is connected by an invisible, intangible web of chaos and order, so are all of our 100 gifts. It all starts with a simple lump of coal. And it ends ... well, you'll see ...

...IS THE WAGE OF A GUY WHO WRITES...

LUMPS O' COAL

A sad Christmas cliché, but if you find this in your stocking, your problems have only just begun.
www.coal.org $.10

...IS ABOUT AS DENSE AS THE MAKERS OF...

NAME ON A GRAIN OF RICE

If an Orange Julius and a Hot Dog on a Stick won't get your girlfriend to "give it up" then nothing says lovin' at the mall like scribbling on starch. Oh, hell, who are we trying to kid? This is so bad it's funny.
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www.wonderfullywacky.com $15.95

...WHICH YOU'LL NEED TO STOMACH...

BEER T-SHIRT/MUG

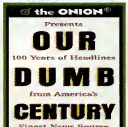
As always, anything to do with liquid bread gets the thumbs-up from us. For the drunk in all of us — a T-shirt imprinted with the LAGER logo "Liquid Amber Giving Extra Reality: The Intelligent alternative to Life" and a matching glass. Drink up.
www.wonderfullywacky.com $19.95

...IS ABOUT AS DENSE AS THE MAKERS OF...

SKYDIVE!

From conception to finish, quite possibly the worst game ever made. Coincidentally, *Skydive*'s tagline is "go ahead and jump" – which is exactly what we'd say if given the choice between jumping off a bridge or playing this game. A skydiving sim for both the Mac and PC in one crap-filled box – exchange for lump of coal.
www.ea.com $19.95

...WHICH MADE US LAUGH, BUT NOT LIKE...



...WHICH WAS A BEST SELLER, LIKE...

ONION'S OUR DUMB CENTURY

The Onion is one of our favorite websites, so it only follows that we'd love their first book as well. A satire of an entire century of news by "America's Favorite News Source".
www.theonion.com $15

...AND THERE IS PLENTY OF MIST IN THE GAME...

MYST MASTERPIECE EDITION

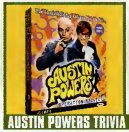
For the 3 people left in Western Somalia who haven't been tempted into buying this game sometime over the past six years, the CD-ROM equivalent of the coffee table book has reappeared. Oh, just buy the damn thing. You'll never finish it, but at least you'll finally belong to our brave, new Stepford-wife world.
www.mystworld.com $29.95

...WHICH MAY, OR MAY NOT BE, INSIDE OF...

PANDORA'S BOX

We'd like to be able to tell you how great this game is, but were too afraid to open it. We do know it's a series of puzzle games from the creator of Tetris, Alexey Pajitnov, if that helps.
www.microsoft.com/games $19.95

...WHICH IS A BRAIN-TEASER MUCH LIKE...



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...WHICH IS AN OBVIOUS PRECURSOR TO...

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Okay, there are few rules you should know. She can touch you, but you can't touch her. No matter what you think is going to happen, sex is out of the question. Tipping is encouraged and there is a two-drink minimum. Warning: Objects on stage may be skankier than they appear.
About $20 at "adult establishments" nationwide

...WHICH REQUIRES A GOOD GRIP LIKE THE...

PROFESSIONAL BULL RIDER

"The Longest 8 Seconds Of Your Life" says the box cover. Wait, they expect us to play this for an *entire* 8 seconds? Isn't that against the Geneva Convention or something. At least it's *Professional Bull Rider* ... we'd hate to see what the amateur version looks like.
www.sierrasports.com $19.95

...JOYSTICK IS TWO SYLLABLES JUST LIKE...

SAITEK ST110 PC JOYSTICK

Remember the old Atari 2600 joysticks ... man, those were the days. They only had one button and one button was all anybody needed. Now, you've gotta have at least four buttons and a throttle. 'Course, those old sticks really sucked. This one doesn't.
www.saitek.com $19.95

...WHICH IS A KID'S GAME JUST LIKE...

TRAINTOWN

Remember when people played with real model trains? Obviously, that was before computers allowed us to co-opt the real world into some virtual bizarro experience, like a carbon copy that doesn't quite look right. But maybe we're just being bitter. Anyway, it's just like the Lionel train sets you used to play with ... only not.
www.nowthisisfun.com $19.95

...STARS A DRAGON AND A GIRL, LIKE THIS...

DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME

After playing this game, you'll believe a dragon can fly. You'll also believe that women can run around in the snow wearing only chain-mail bikinis and not catch hypothermia. At any rate, *Drakan* is a third-person adventure game crossed with a dragon-flying sim.
www.drakan-game.com $39.99

...WHICH YOU WEAR WHEN BUYING...

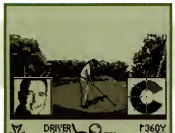
DRAGON SUNGLASSES

When you want to block out the ol' UV rays, hide a shiner, or just try and look really cool, you can't go wrong with a pair of Dragon sunglasses. Just don't wear them at night because you'll look like a dork.
www.dragonoptical.com $70-$100

...WITH AS MUCH ACTING TALENT AS...

VIVID PORN

The video stuff is okay, but DVD porn is the future. There's multiple camera angles, actress biographies, and even "mini-games" (which looked a lot like film clips of sex to us.) Ow, our wrists hurt just thinking about it.
www.vividvideo.com How much you got?



...AND TIGER JUST MIGHT PLAY GOLF USING...

TIGER WOODS GOLF FOR PALM PILOT

"Experience golf TIGER STYLE!" Or so we might've said if 3Com ever returned any of our calls and sent us a Palm VII to test it out on. Hey, guys, if you're reading this, it's not too late, okay?
www.easports.com $29.95

...SPEAKING OF A TEASE, DON'T FORGET...

STRIP TEES

No, we didn't make a huge spelling error, and yes, we're kinda disappointed too. But let's get real, this is probably the closest we'll ever come to a real striptease, especially for less than 30 bucks. That pervy uncle of yours might get a kick out of this tchochke — a glass babe filled with golf tees. Yuk, yuk ...
www.wonderfullywacky.com $29.95

...REVELATIONS IS VERY CLOSE TO...

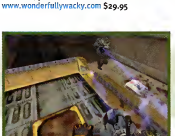
TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

Buy the absolutely, positively, cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die last *Tomb Raider* game ever made ... this century. We may kid Lara Croft, but, outdated engine or not, she still has her charms. Two big ones, in fact.
www.tombraider.com $49.95

...WHOSE STAFF PLAYED A LOT OF...

PC ACCELERATOR

The gift that keeps on giving. Twelve issues of opinionated previews, brutally honest reviews, two jam-packed CDs full of games, babes, and a whole lot of funny shit makes this the best buy for your money.
www.pcxl.com $29.95/yr



...IS THE BEST OF IT'S KIND, MUCH LIKE...

HALF-LIFE: GAME OF THE YR EDITION

Half-Life is the only game ever awarded a prestigious 11 rating (on a scale of 1-10) by PCXL. The perfect marriage of plot, first-person shooting, and shopping cart pushing. Comes with *Team Fortress Classic*.
www.sierra.com $49.95

...LISTENED TO ON A...

DIE HARD TRILOGY DVD SET

There are a few lessons to be learned here. First of all, don't marry Bruce Willis. Nothing good will come of it. Secondly, the British hold grudges. Thirdly, if you do marry Bruce Willis, learn how to disarm explosives.
www.foxhome.com $60.00

p. 56

yo MAMA CAMPS OUT!
ROCKET WRAP
PACKAGE OF ONE 50¢ USE 2 QUARTERS BACK TO BACK
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
I GOT LUCKY ON THE BUS!
ONLY 50¢ PKG.
Operates on TWO QUARTERS ONLY
Hold two quarters TOGETHER and insert in slot-
TURN HANDLE TO RIGHT to receive package.
wild vixen
ONLY 50¢ EACH
Operates on TWO QUARTERS ONLY
Hold two quarters TOGETHER and insert in slot-
TURN HANDLE TO RIGHT to receive package.
QUAKE III ARENA

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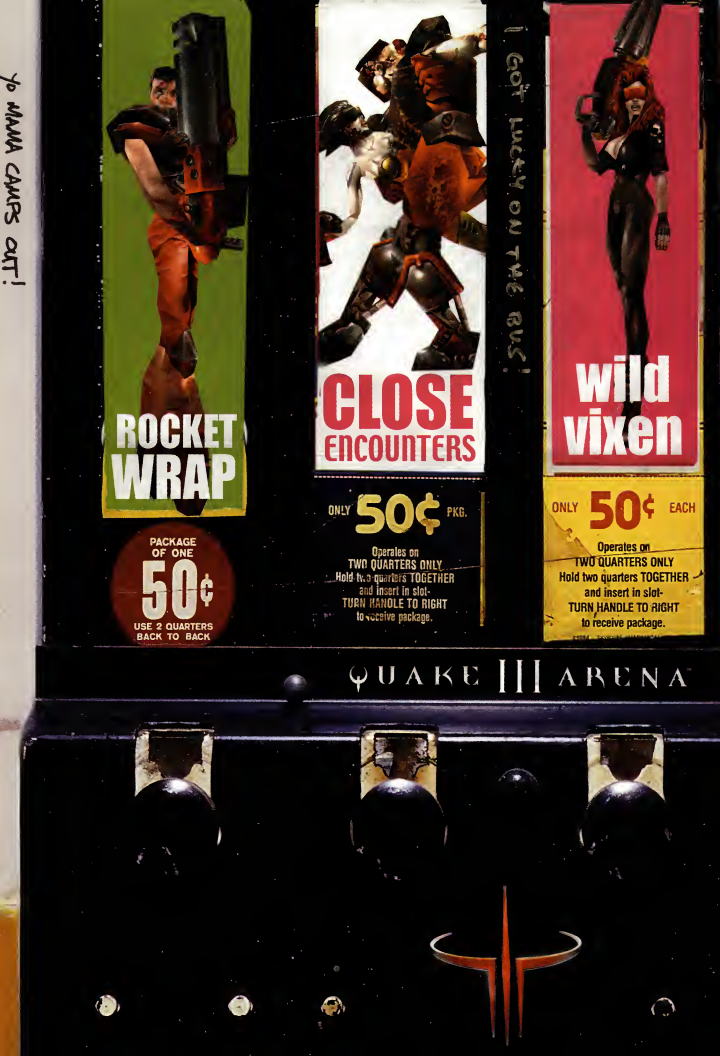
ROCKET WRAP
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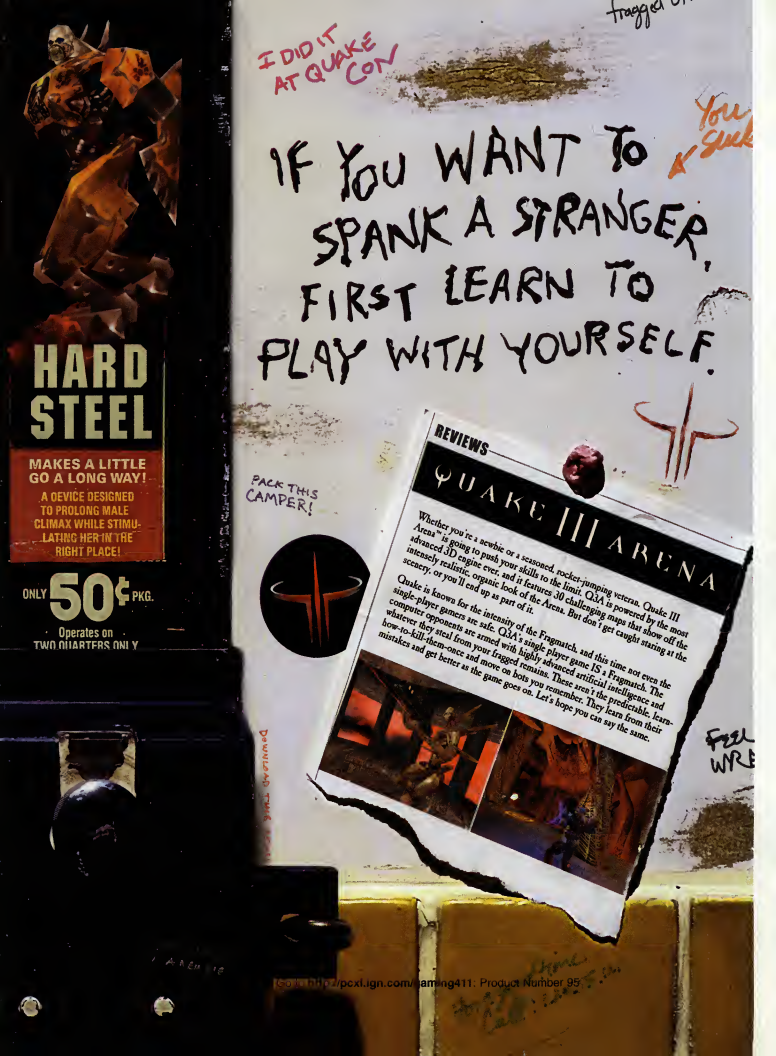
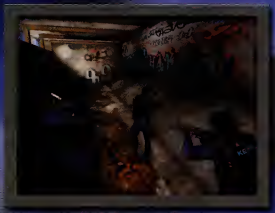


I DID IT AT QUAKE CON
IF YOU WANT TO SPANK A STRANGER, FIRST LEARN TO PLAY WITH YOURSELF.
You Suck
HARD STEEL
MAKES A LITTLE GO A LONG WAY!
A DEVICE DESIGNED TO PROLONG MALE CLIMAX WHILE STIMULATING HER IN THE RIGHT PLACE!
ONLY 50¢ PKG.
Operates on TWO QUARTERS ONLY
PACK THIS CAMPER!
REVIEWS
QUAKE III ARENA
Whether you're a newbie or a seasoned, rocket-jumping veteran, Quake III Arena™ is going to push your skills to the limit. Q3A is powered by the most advanced 3D engine ever, and it features 30 challenging maps that show off the intensely realistic, organic look of the Arena. But don't get caught staring at the scenery, or you'll end up as part of it.
Quake is known for the intensity of the Fragmatch, and this time not even the single-player gamers are safe. Q3A's single player game IS a Fragmatch. The computer opponents are armed with highly advanced artificial intelligence and whatever they steal from your fragged remains. These aren't the predictable, learn-how-to-kill-them-once and move on bots you remember. They learn from their mistakes and get better as the game goes on. Let's hope you can say the same.
FEEL WRE

Realism, Tactics

First stop on any mission is the pre-assault briefing. Here you'll receive the latest updates on the current crisis, configure your team's arsenal, and determine your entry port and tactical approach to the target location.

Systematically search each environment, or take command to breach and clear each location until you find your suspect. As the Element Leader, stealth and dynamic tactics are just a keystroke away when commanding your five-man team.



16 stunning photo-realisitic locations, filled with more than 150 motion captured characters. Each mission is based on real L.A. locations, including the sewer system, the Convention Center, and even the LAX airport control tower.

Experience the challenge of CQB's revolutionary AI. Encounter over 100 goal-oriented characters who react to your every move, ensuring you'll never play any mission the same way twice. From tactical officers to bad guys - they're so smart it's scary.

UNCOMPROMISED DUTY • HONOR AND VALOR •

SWAT

SIERRA STUDIOS

© 1999 Sierra On-Line, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Sierra, Sierra Studios, SWAT and Close Quarters Battle are trademarks of Sierra On-Line, Inc.

and Intensity
"10-David, in WLA division, a 211 in progress with shots fired and an officer down at California Security Bank. At least three suspects inside the location with four or more hostages. Suspects armed with automatic weapons and in full body armor."
SWAT 3
CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE
www.sierrastudios.com
Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411 Product Number 144

...WHICH REQUIRES IMAGINATION LIKE...

IMAGYNASIUM

"Robert Redford's Sundance for Kids" says the box cover. Really? Do cellular-phone wielding executives hover in the background, judging your kid's artistic future? Oh, well, it lets rugrats age 6-12 create their own stories, music, and art and anything that keeps 'em off the streets is fine by us.
www.southpeak.com $29.95

...STARRING STRANGE ALIEN VISITORS LIKE...

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS SUBSCRIPTION

Think you know what's going on in the world? Unless you read the Weekly World News, you don't know squat. It's the only newspaper in the world that keeps you posted on the whereabouts of the elusive Bat Boy, space aliens in politics, or haunted toilets. Plus, WWN is the home of our favorite columnist, Ed Anger.
www.weeklyworldnews.com $39.96/year

...SET ON A ALIEN PLANET, MUCH LIKE...

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

Technically, it should probably be called "Alien VS Predator VS The Guy Who Yells 'Aw, Man, What The Hell Is That? Nooooooo!' Before His Intestines Are Ripped Out" but that probably didn't fit on the box cover. A first-person game based on the popular movie franchises and comic book series. Comes with free underwear, if you're running short.
www.foxinteractive.com $29.99

...AND BONE-CRUNCHING AUDIO LIKE WITH A...

BRUCE LEE COLLECTION DVD SET

Before Jackie Chan or even that fat guy on Martial Law, there was Bruce Lee. It's safe to say that Bruce didn't have much input into this set seeing as how he died over 25 years ago, but who needs a director's commentary to let us know that someone's getting his ass kicked?
www.foxhome.com $90

...WHICH IS A PCI CARD JUST LIKE THE...

GUILLEMOT FORTISSIMO SOUND CARD

The Fortissimo is a four-channel digital sound board powered by the latest Yamaha engine. Includes Sensaura 3D Positional Audio and supports both EAX and A3D extensions for a bargain price.
www.guillemot.com $49.99

...TO WHICH YOU CAN CONNECT A...

ENTREGA 4 PORT USB UPGRADE

Have a USB mouse, USB gamepad, USB digital camera, and a USB can-opener and just can't figure out where to plug it all in? Easy, add 4 extra ports with this PCI card.
www.entrega.com $59.95

...WHICH OFFERS A 3D EXPERIENCE LIKE...

ELSA REVELATOR 3D GLASSES

If you miss the goofy feeling of wearing red-and-blue glasses at fine movies like *Friday the 13th Part III* in 3D or *Jaws* 3D, then these might be for you. Actually, the ELSA glasses look much cooler and do provide an impressive 3D effect to most games. Maybe it's not so geeky after all.
http://www.elsa.com/ $70

...WHICH IS SCIENCE-FICTION LIKE SOME...

SYSTEM SHOCK II

The only shock to us was that it took so long for there to be a sequel. A truly disturbing mixture of RPG and first-person shooter, *System Shock II* may be high on the difficulty scale, but well worth playing.
www.shockz.com $29.99

...WHICH FEATURE BAD ACTING LIKE...

PARAMOUNT DVDS

Even if you didn't watch the movies when they were in theaters, experiencing them on DVD is worth it just for the extras. For example, *Payback* gives you a "behind the scenes" featurette while *The Out Of Towners* will give you a chance to ponder Steve Martin's once-great acting career. Other notable new DVDs are *20 Cigarettes*, *Varsity Blues*, and the cult classic *Barbarella*.
www.homevideo.paramount.com $24.99 each

...THEY ALSO WORK WITH GAME AUDIO LIKE IN...

SONY STREET STYLE HEADPHONES

When you're kicking back listening to all those illicit MP3s that you've downloaded, cutting-edge headphones are the way to go. These are ultra-small and ultra-light at 2 ounces and the gold-plated mini-plug cuts down on noisy interference like managing editors asking for copy.
www.sony.com $39.99

...AND CERTAIN AMMO DOES THIS TO ARMOR...

RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

This sequel to *Rainbow Six* won't disappoint fans of the original. Take down terrorists, blow away the bad guys, save humanity, all while not making bad "Rogue Spear" puns in the process.
www.redstorm.com $49.95

...SPEAKING OF TONGUES THEY ARE ALSO IN...

PIERCING

Having both ears pierced just isn't as daring as it used to be. Nowadays, if you want to impress people with a piercing, it's gotta be some place pretty unusual — somewhere that will cause people to say, "Oooh. That's gotta hurt." Navel piercings run about $60, tongues $100. Anywhere else you want a hole is your business.
http://members.xoom.com/ScaryLarrys/ $60 and up

...WHERE GUYS IN RED GET BLOWN UP LIKE IN...

QUAKE III: ARENA

After playing Q3Test's paltry three levels over and over again, we hunger for more. Unfortunately, it's gonna obliterate all of our December writing deadlines. You guys don't really need a February issue, right?
www.quakearena.com $49.99

...AND TREK DOWN A MOUNTAIN WITH...

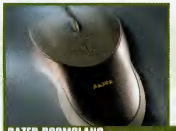
STAR TREK ORIGINAL: VOLUME 1

The original crew of the Starship Enterprise journeys home once again courtesy of DVD. Watch as Shatner sucks in his gut! Cringe in fear at the low-budget special effects! Check out how Yeoman Rand's skirt seems to get smaller and smaller! Truly amazing.
homevideo.paramount.com $19.99

...WHOSE USERS LIVE IN HOUSES WITH...

IMPERIAL SKATE PRODUCTS

Every skater needs a good deck, and they don't come much finer than the ones available through Imperial Skate Products (including Maple, Dynasty, and 151). Skate over to the website and check 'em out. We like 'em.
www.imperialdistribution.com Around $45 each



...THE HOUSE OF CHOICE FOR PLAYING...

RAZER BOOMSLANG

A mouse for the hardcore gamer that promises over twice the sensitivity of your average mouse (is it made out of lambskin?) with five buttons and a scroll wheel. It may even look cooler than the game you're using it with.
www.razerzone.com $69.99-$99.99

...EVENTUALLY COMING TO A HAND-HELD LIKE...

DAIKATANA

Yeah, buzz has deteriorated on this game faster than a frat pledge in a drunk tank, but it's finally being released. Sure, it might suck, but, good or bad, John Romero's long-awaited opus will be the ultimate novelty game. Print up some T-shirts that say "I Survived Daikatana!" and present them to your shell-shocked friends.
www.daikatana.com $49.99 ($19.99 week after release)

...FITS NICELY IN THE POCKET OF YOUR...

NEO GEO POCKET

Let's face it, the Nintendo Gameboy is a little long in the tooth. The Neo Geo Pocket, however, is a new handheld gaming system with the uncanny ability to make Rob forget about his $2,000 computer system and play *Bust-A-Move* for hours on end.
www.snkusa.com $69.95

...WHICH IS AN RTS LIKE...

C & C: TIBERIAN SUN

Sure, it could have been better, but it's still realtime strategy in the C&C tradition. Note to James Earl Jones: What were you thinking?
www.westwood.com $49.95

...AT HOME WE USED TO LOVE MAKING...

HOMEWORLD

One of the best realtime strategies released this year. Check out our review and strategy guide in this issue to find out why.
www.sierra.com $44.99

...CARS DON'T TURN PROPERLY WITHOUT...

HOT WHEELS CRASH!

As the name implies, the entire point of this game is crashing your car into stuff and making huge explosions. That's using the Hot Wheels license to its full, kid-satisfying potential! Now, all we need is a game called "Burning Things With A Magnifying Glass" and we'll be happy campers.
www.hotwheels.com $34.99

...WHICH WE GOT FREE BY CALLING SOME...

VANS SHOES

Ok, if you're reading this, you'll probably never be a pro skateboarder or snowboarder, but with a little help you can look just like one. The first place to start is the shoes, and Vans shoes are cool enough to give you the look without breaking your pocketbook. Mens Vans start around $70. Pick up a pair for your girlfriend for around $50
www.vans.com $50-$90

...HAIR PLUGS DON'T USE USB LIKE...

EXTENSIONS

So you're a real poser and want to look cool standing in line for the X-Games. Dreadlocks can be painful and high maintenance, but are de rigeur for "extreme" sporting types. If your hair's too short, they can glue on some mostly real-looking extensions. You'll walk in looking like a computer nerd and walk out looking like a computer nerd with a headache.
www.dreadlocks.com $75-150

...AND YOU CAN'T TAKE A STEP WITHOUT...

ADS USB ULTRA HUB 4

If we can put a man on the moon, then how come I have to wade through tangled wires every time I want to plug a USB device into the back of my PC. Well, you don't have to with an external hub that gives you 4 extra ports. It's one small step for me and a giant leap for ... oh, never mind.
www.adstech.com $54.00

▶ p. 60

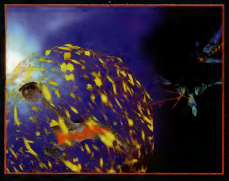
How Does a Klingon Feel at the Helm of a Capital Ship?

With more than 2 years of development refinement, Star Trek: Klingon Academy provides the most realistic capital ship experience available.

- *As a Klingon, expect run-ins with competing races, both traditional and original to Klingon Academy. You may even have the pleasure of destroying the Enterprise itself.*
- *Experience the first true use of 3D space terrain providing rich mission variety throughout the single-player campaign.*

It's all here. It's all new. It's all Star Trek.

- *Ships move and feel like true capital ships – not fighters.*
- *Quality of ship's crew affects the performance of your warship and improves with experience.*
- *Fire weapons simultaneously across multiple firing arcs.*
- *20 weapon systems.*
- *Multiplayer mode (IPX, TCP/IP)*



Command your warship with skill and daring; or you'll find yourself caught defenseless in the Tholian Web.

Control multiple firing arcs with the gunnery chair interface. Order boarding parties to capture enemy ships.

Fight in dense nebulae clouds, maneuver through asteroid belts, battle within the accretion disk of a black hole and more.

Get the guide General Chang gives his cadets to turn them into Klingon warriors! Available at bookstores, software stores and online.

SYBEX

www.sybex.com

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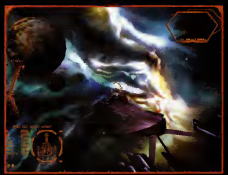
STAR TREK®
KLINGON ACADEMY™

"This game looked hot, and is easily the best looking space combat game we have seen on the PC to date."
- GameFan Online

Featuring Christopher Plummer as General Chang and David Warner as Chancellor Gorkon, reprising their roles from Star Trek® VI: The Undiscovered Country.™



A new race in the Star Trek® universe! Fight the Sha' Kurians wherever the battle leads you.

Over 40 ships are exclusive to Star Trek® Klingon Academy™ and are brand new to the Star Trek® universe.

REQUIRES 3D Acceleration

COMING SOON TO:

SoftwareForPCs.com

14° East

Interplay

BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

COMING SOON

www.interplay.com/klingon

Paramount

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 60

...WHICH MAKES LOUD CLICKS THROUGH...

MICROSOFT INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER

The Intelliimouse Explorer is the new object of our affections. To find out why, check out this month's review in TechPhiles.
www.microsoft.com $74.95

...WHICH ARE CONNECTED TO A...

LABTEC LCS-2422 SPEAKERS

Duo satellite speakers and a 20-watt subwoofer should make most gamers happy. Unlike other brands, Labtec prints a personal letter from the Labtec Team on the side of the box along with a group picture. Cut out the picture and put it in your wallet to feel like "a real team player".
www.labtec.com $79.99

...PLAYS MUSIC NOR MALLY FOUND ON A...

CREATIVE SOUNDBLASTER LIVE! MP3+

Virtually identical to its sibling, the X-Gamer, the Sound-Blaster Live! MP3+ is bundled with MP3 software instead. (Duh!) And since Ed spends all his time downloading MP3s instead of working, we assume that's a good thing.
www.creative.com $99.99

...THE BELT WOULD BE A PERFECT PLACE FOR A...

LEVI'S ORIGINAL SPIN JEANS

Do you look like you're wearing a pair of denim doughnuts around your ankles? Get rid of the cuffs, shorty — Levi's has the answer. The Original Spin program allows you to design your own jeans, made specifically to your measurements and tastes. While all Levi's stores have salespeople to measure you, we got to try out the chi-chi location here in San Francisco, with its computerized kiosks that take your measurements digitally.
www.levi.com/originalspin/how.asp $55

...THOUGH THE COLORS ARE A BIT...

SONY PSYC WALKMAN

The iMac of personal stereos, each Psyc Walkman comes in ... umm ... "Psyc-e-delic" (we're not making this up) colors. Features include an AM/FM stereo tuner, tape player, automatic volume limiter, station presets, and wide band tuning. At least they're not called the Walkman Extreme.
www.sony.com $29.95-$59.95

...WHICH IS A COMIC BOOK LIST-EO IN...

TOTALLY MAD

The Usual Gang Of Idiots has collected nearly 50 years of Mad magazines onto 7 CD-ROMS in this definitive boxed set. That's over 500 issues, plus extras like cartoons, animated fold-ins, behind-the-scenes observations, and a roll of toilet paper (for that really multimedia experience). A great gift for anyone with a sense of humor.
www.broderbund.com $69.95

...WHICH HELPS IMMERSE YOU LIKE THE...

SAITEK R100 RACING WHEEL

You know why you need this? Because you're going to die. Maybe not today and maybe not tomorrow, but someday. Do you want to go your entire life having never played a racing game with a steering wheel? We didn't think so.
www.saitek.com $49.95

...WHICH BLASTS A LOT OF SOUND LIKE THE...

IMERON INTENSOR FX

Imagine your little brother engrossed in *Super Mario 64* when he suddenly asks, "Hey, why can't my buttcheeks shake when I jump on toadstools?" Well, Johnny, now they can! The Intensor FX is a portable gaming seat for kids utilizing Vibra-Kick technology, which we think means it makes your ass jiggle.
www.imeron.com $89.00

...AND SHARES THE NAME-LASH WITH THE...

LABTEC LCS-2416 SPEAKERS

We're not sure why, but it seems that the flatter we can get our computers, the better. Flat monitors, flat PC chassis, and, now, flat speakers. The subwoofer is still fat, though. At least some things don't change.
www.labtec.com $79.99

...AND DOCTORS WEAR PROTEC-TIVE GOGGLES LIKE...

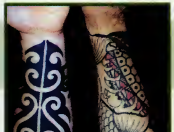
DOC MARTENS

Designed by Dr. Klaus Marten in the '50s, Doc Martens are comfortable but still stylish. We've worn these things for years, and if you can survive the brutal breaking-in period, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better looking, more durable shoe. SoftMoc.com has a great selection of Docs (as well as numerous other brands of footwear) and a 30-day money-back guarantee.
www.softmoc.com $90

...AND GRAG-GINS ARE A POPULAR KIND OF...

DRAGON SNOWBOARDING GOGGLES

Hey, if you're going to do this snowboarding thing with real powder and a real mountain then you need some goggles. Otherwise, you're just playing some game called Snowboard! and it doesn't matter what you wear on your face ... besides a look of shame.
www.dragonoptical.com $75



...WHICH ARE TOUGH JUST LIKE THE...

TATTOO

You've got the duds; your hair is tied, dyed, and thrown to the sides; your tongue has a gaping hole in it and you're still not extreme enough? Well, roll up your sleeve and get that pasty white skin permanently embellished. Reputable tattoo artists charge around $100 an hour, so tribal armbands (just like Salmon!) start at about $125.
http://members.xoom.com/ScaryLarrys/ $100 and up

SONY PSYC DISCMAN

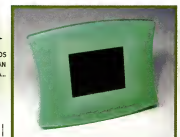
...WHICH IS PORTABLE JUST LIKE A...

Portable CD players that are thin, cool, and colorful. What's not to love here? It's more of the horrendous translucent iMac design sense.
www.sony.com $139.95

IOMEGA 250MB ZIP DRIVE

...THAT HOLDS PICS YOU CAN SHOW ON A...

So, you've downloaded so much porn that it's time to make the choice between deleting some or zapping *Quake III*. Now, that's just crazy talk! Put that porn on a 250MB zip disk instead. We hear there are other uses for it, but we can't really think of any at the moment.
www.iomega.com $179.95



CYBER PICTURE FRAME

...DESIGNED TO SHOW PERKY PICS JUST LIKE A...

This nifty little gadget lets you pop digital pictures onto SmartMedia flash ROM cards, then view them as you might in a picture frame – only the photos can be rotated or put in a slideshow. Will impress your friends and frighten your enemies into thinking you've come from the future.
http://www.hscus.com/ $279.99

COMICBASE MASTER EDITION

...AND COMICAL PRESIDENT DICK HAD THE LAST NAME...

Sure, it's possible that buying Ambush Bug #1 was a sound financial investment. We're not here to judge. But if you'd like to organize your comic book collection before it takes over your life then invest in ComicBase first. Create detailed lists, find pricing data for over 100,000 comics, and calculate potential worth.
www.human-computing.com $129

NIXON WATCHES

...WHILE PEOPLE GET WATCHED ALL THE TIME USING A...

A new type of watch company, Nixon builds watches "we can wear when we skate, when we snowboard, when we surf, and when we don't" they say. All we know is that they're tough little buggers and have style to spare. Even the names are cool: The Super Hero, The Odyssey, The Don, The Grace, The Powerslave, The Clutch, etc.
www.nixonnow.com $65-$200

CREATIVE VIDEOBLASTER WEBCAM3

...BUT DON'T FILM THE NASTY OR IT MIGHT SHOW UP ON A...

Take digital still pictures, record full motion video, or discover the "seamy side" of Microsoft Netmeeting. The possibilities are nearly endless with this color USB-port compatible PC camera.
www.creative.com $71

ACT-LABS GUN SYSTEM

...LIKE ANOTHER SYSTEM WITH A GUN PERIPHERAL, THE...

With all the hunting games coming out lately, it's about time somebody put out a PC gun peripheral. Of course, what you want is a big-ass deer rifle, but what you get is a lame silver-colored plastic lasergun. Can't have it all.
www.act-labs.com $89.99

SEGA DREAMCAST

...WHICH RUNS WINDOWS CE LIKE THE...

The next generation of console gaming is here! (At least until the Sony Playstation 2, Microsoft X-Box, and Nintendo Dolphin come out. You could wait, but then you'd have to go a whole year without a new console system. Besides, Sega spent a lot of time on those spiffy commercials and you don't want to disappoint them, do you?)
www.sega.com $199.99

CASIO CASSIOPEIA E-105

...AND PLAYS MP3S LIKE THE...

A color, palm-size PC that plays MP3s and MPEGs, does e-mail, and plays games. In short, we love it. Note to Casio Guys, we never received it. Really. Umm ... could you send about 5 more?
www.casio.com $599

G-SHOCK WATCH

...WHICH ARE WATERPROOF LIKE THE SUBMARINE IN...

The manufacturers say these are "toughest watches in the world," citing customers like an MD-80 repairman whose watch survived being run over by a 10-ton fork lift. We can't vouch for that, but we do think the G-Force and its kid brother, the Baby-G, are definitely cool-looking and have some great gadgets like a 20-page telememo feature and a blood type indicator.
http://gshock.com/ $99-$150

YELLOW SUBMARINE DOODADS

...WHICH HAS A PREFIX OF SUB- JUST LIKE A WOOFER IN...

So seeing the re-release of the psychadelic Beatles fantasy flick has made you a new fan. But you want more. You want the real thing. Well you can't have it — most of the original artwork has been lost or destroyed through the years. But you can get practically everything else including the DVD, action figures, and animation cells. And the folks below can track down vintage animation art of just about any kind, from "The Simpsons" to "Scooby-Doo."
www.adlerandco.com $190-$2000

CS FPS2000 DIGITAL SPEAKERS

...WHICH PLAYS DIGITAL MUSIC JUST LIKE THE...

A surround sound speaker/subwoofer combo for the PC that looks a bit like an Imperial walker. (See this month's review in TechPhiles for more information).
www.cambridgesoundworks.com $199.99

...AND THERE'S NOTHING PURTIER THAN THE...

3DFX VOODOO3 3500

Until the Voodoo4 is released next year, this is the top of the line video card from 3Dfx. Silghtly faster than two Voodoo2s in SLI mode, it's still more than enough for any game on the market. It even ships with a built-in TV tuner.
www.3dfx.com $249

...EXCEPT DRUNK BLACKMAIL PHOTOS TAKEN WITH A...

GREAT AMERICAN BEER CLUB

If you're too lazy to get off your butt and buy beer, then have the beer come to you. When you become a member, you get a 12-pack of three different types of micro-brewed beer delivered each month. That sounds a lot better than that 40 ouncer of Schlitz you were eyeing.
www.greatclubs.com $24.95/ month

...WHICH WOULD EMBARASS IF THE EVIDENCE WAS PASSED VIA...

SANYO VPC-X350 DIGITAL CAMERA

It may be tiny at a mere 7 ounces, but the ability to take pictures up to a resolution of 1024x768 and hold up to 60 pictures (640x480) puts the VPC-X350 in the digital camera big leagues.
www.sanyodigital.com $599

...AND THEN YOU'LL TAKE COLD SHOWERS WITH A...

SONY WATCHMAN COLOR TV

Until a microchip can be implanted directly into our corneas, beaming "The Simpsons" into our minds 24/7, a portable TV will just have to do. The FDL-250T has a 2.5" Active Matrix screen for sharp pictures with rich color, and even includes a built-in sun shade.
www.sony.com $169.99

...BECAUSE YOUR ONLY SOURCE OF NUDITY IS...

CD SHOWER COMPANION

After a gruelling match of *Half-Life*, what could be better than an hour in the shower with Britney Spears? Leave it to the guys at Sharper Image to offer the first and only water-resistant CD player for the shower. We put this baby to the test, and it cranks out some awesome sound. It also picks up radio and sound from broadcast TV.
www.sharperimage.com $189

...WHICH ISN'T AS SATISFYING AS A SPICE MOVIE RECORDED ON A...

THE COMPLETE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The magazine that every kid reads for all the wrong reasons presents 110 years of National Geographic in CD-ROM form. This is how adolescent boys got their hands on nudie pics long before the Internet was invented. And, it's even considered educational.
www.broderbund.com $149.95

...THOUGH CARS ARE CHASED BY DOGS LIKE A...

EMPEG CAR MP3 PLAYER

This is the thing we've all wanted ever since we first started downloading MP3s. Digital audio – in your car. EMPEG says it is offering models as low as 4GB and as high as 28 GB (slobber). EMPEG – ever hear of Free Stuff We Love?
http://www2.empeg.com/index.html $1000

...WHICH CONTAINS A CPU LIKE THE...

SONY ROBOT DOG

Better than a real dog because it won't do any of the annoying/disgusting things a real dog does. It won't piss all over the place, sniff other dog's butts, or hump your leg, but it'll be a babe magnet because you were only one of 2,000 people who could afford one.
www.sony.com $2000

...THAT CAN EDIT PICTURES TAKEN WITH THE...

FUTURE POWER POWER SERIES PC

For the serious gamer on your list, a brand-new PC is always a good choice. This one is a PIII 500, 128MB, 20GB HDD, 100MB Zip Drive, 56kpbs modem, and a Voodoo3 3000. All at a reasonable price.
www.futurepowerusa.com $1649-$2049

...BUT TO BE A REAL "PLAYER", YOU NEED A...

HOME STEREO MP3 PLAYER

Now that you've got MP3s in your car, why not hook them into your home sound system. Easier than bringing your stereo to the living room, Vertical Horizon's home MP3 player will play burned MP3 discs as well as play CDs. And the best part? It won't bust your bank account.
www.evhi.com $200

...AND LEATHER IS OFTEN WORN BY REAL...

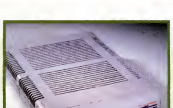
LEVI'S PATCH LEATHER JACKET

Your big brother (or your dad, if he was groovy enough) probably had one of these umpteen years ago, and naturally, the fashion cycle's come around again. The chances of finding an authentic '70s jacket are pretty unlikely, so get the next best thing — a leather patchwork jacket from Levi's, worthy of Mike Brady.
www.levis.com $260

...SO YOU CAN LISTEN TO ROCK AND REALLY ROLL WITH THE...

DIAMOND RIO 500

Diamond's new portable MP3 player has 64MB of onboard memory, allowing it to hold nearly two hours worth of music. Comes in metallic gray, transparent teal, and purple colors. Nearly two hours worth of illegal MP3s downloaded off warez sites not included.
www.diamondmm.com $269.95



...SO YOUR WIFE COULD VIEW IT IN HER NEW...

MOTOROLA CABLE MODEM

By now, you've probably figured out that a 56k modem is helluva slow and having a T-1 connection installed in your house probably isn't feasible. Get a cable modem and experience 30Mbps downloading speeds. That's so fast you can probably download the massive *Nocturne* demo in only 4 hours!
www.mot.com/multimedia $35-$55/month

...WHICH WOULD PREVENT YOU FROM EVER IMPRESSING...

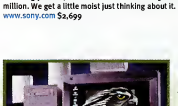
SONY PLM-S700 GLASSTRON

TV glasses! This is the greatest thing ever in the history of mankind! Wearing these is like watching a 52" big screen from 6.5 feet away. They can plug into any video source, including your PC, and have a resolution of 1.5 million x 2 million. We get a little moist just thinking about it.
www.sony.com $2,699

...THAT WAS PROGRAMMED USING A...

TIVO

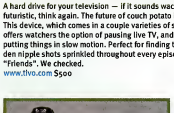
A hard drive for your television — if it sounds wacked out futuristic, think again. The future of couch potato is now. This device, which comes in a couple varieties of storage, offers watchers the option of pausing live TV, and even putting things in slow motion. Perfect for finding the hidden nipple shots sprinkled throughout every episode of "Friends". We checked.
www.tivo.com $500



...THAT WILL PLAY AN UPCOMING STAR TREK GAME STARRING...

FALCON NORTHWEST MACH V

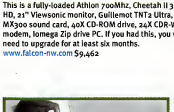
This is a fully-loaded Athlon 700Mhz, Cheetah II 36.4GB HD, 21" Viewsonic monitor, Guillemot TNT2 Ultra, Diamond MX300 sound card, 40X CD-ROM drive, 24X CDR-W, 56k modem, Iomega Zip drive PC. If you had this, you wouldn't need to upgrade for at least six months.
www.falcon-nw.com $9,462



...OF GETTING SNATCHED UP IN A BEAR TRAP WHILE WEARING AN...

NIKON D1 DIGITAL CAMERA SET

This is supposedly one of the better digital cameras, and for 6000 bucks, it had better be. Of course, we got the ol' five finger discount. You can take pictures of your girlfriend naked in up to 2012 x 1324 resolution. You can also put regular 35mm camera lenses on it to get stuff like fish-eye effects so you can look all extreme and crazy in the masthead of your magazine.
www.nikon.com $5,580



...THAT MAKES PEOPLE LOOK LIKE CYBORGS SIMILAR TO THE ONE PLAYED BY...

ANTI-GRIZZLY BEAR SUIT

For those of you who frequently find yourself attacked by rabid bears, or just have a spare 10 Gs lying around, you may have found your angel. Troy James Hurtubise has spent the last few years perfecting his Grizzly Bear protection suit after surviving a grizzly attack in 1984. Says he was inspired to build the suit by the movie Robocop.
www.nfb.ca/E/4/troy.html $10,000

...WHICH IS AN EXTRAVAGANT YUPPIE TOY JUST LIKE THE...

HUNSAKER BATTLE CHAIR

Who needs a chair with speakers in it? Why, you do, of course! Impress everyone you know, while simultaneously training your cat to stay far, far away from your computer. Plus, it's a cheap way to get a lower back massage.
www.battlechair.com $299-$499

...AND LEVAR BURTON IS A STAR TREK ACTOR, JUST LIKE...

BURTON SNOWBOARD GEAR

Ride down the slopes in style with Burton custom equipment like step-in freestyle bindings, moto boots, a Biolight Plus jacket, Biolight Cargo pants, Biolight Wiremesh Pipe Gloves, and, of course, a Burton Custom 60 board.
www.burton.com $1150/complete set

JERI RYAN

COST → $20,000 per half-day

If you'd like to use Ms. Ryan for her modeling services, be prepared to pay and pay big. While most Star Trek actors are lucky just to get an occasional sci-fi convention gig, Jeri Ryan is commanding a daily wage that might make Bill Gates sit up and take notice. Live long and profit ... err ... prosper, Jeri. We aren't sure if this fee includes hanging out and watching TV, but we will ask.

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Free internet multiplayer support allows you to race against your friends

1024x768 Glide or D3D graphics bring the racing action into sharp detail

3D positional sound allows you to hear your opponent attempting to pass

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www.NASCAR.com
www.sierrasports.com

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The Epic 3D Role-Playing Masterpiece
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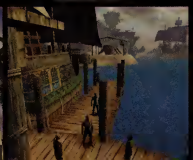


Know you're gonna score.

It's a done deal. That hot new release you're drooling over will soon be yours. You just found www.ebworld.com, the planet's most reliable source for games, guides and accessories at great prices – plus up-to-the-minute release dates, online news and reviews from fellow gamers. (What more would you expect from the people who brought you Electronics Boutique?) Whatever you need, know you're gonna score it here. We'd never tease you, man.

EBworld.com

electronics boutique

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 135

AOL Keyword: EBWorld

WE'RE INSIDE YOUR WORLD.

Cambridge Soundworks FPS2000 Digital Speakers

PRICE →	$199 SRP
WEBSITE →	cambridgesoundworks.com
BUNDLE →	None

Of all the high-end equipment that gamers care about, good, wall-rattling speakers are probably the most overlooked. Just as you wouldn't want to install a Voodoo4 in a P166 (it would be like throwing a brick at a gnat), supporting a Soundblaster Live! or Vortex2 board with the crappy two speaker setups included with most new PCs is tantamount to a crime against nature. As we recently discovered, replacing those two speakers with the FPS2000 surround system really brings 3D sound-enhanced games to life. Atmospheric, moody games (like *Shadow Man*) become even creepier and action games (like *Quake III*) attain a level of desperate urgency that didn't seem evident before.

The FPS2000 consists of four 3.5" x 3.5" x 3.5" satellite speakers and a high-output powered subwoofer (with a 25-watt subwoofer amp and a 4-channel, 7-watt speaker amp). Plastic tripod stands (that are rather flimsy in our expert opinion) are included, in case you can't attach the rear speakers to a back wall, or the vast assortment of supplied Velcro stickers doesn't get the job done. Handy desk stands are also bundled in for all four speakers. An independent volume and power control switch that can be conveniently installed anywhere the 12' cord will go is a useful touch. (The side of your monitor is a perfect place, for instance.) And on top of all that, the speakers sound frickin' terrific.

This set is specifically designed to work with the Creative Sound-Blaster Live!, but it'll work with any sound card. The one problem we found, however, was in getting the digital hookup to work. The system comes with a 9-pin Digital DIN cable that is supposed to plug directly into the SoundBlaster Live! digital I/O card, but newer versions of the Live! don't ship with a separate I/O card and have a standard digital mini-jack. (Doh!) The instructions for our Sound-Blaster Live! X-Gamer board claims that a converter is included with the FPS2000, but our kit didn't have it. That's a one-hand-doesn't-know-what-the-other-is-doing oversight that can infuriate consumers intent on enjoying the full potential of product synergy. But when it comes to sound quality — digital or analog — you won't be disappointed with this surround sound setup.

The Cambridge Soundworks FPS2000 Digital Surround System is damn loud. Scream for mercy or the speakers will run around and chase you on those weird-ass legs of theirs.

RATING 8

Pluses

→ Big sound in a small package
→ Variety in setup

Minuses

→ Digital support may need converter
→ No headphone jack

TECH RUMORS

Our series of undercover agents located around the world (or at least Brisbane, CA) have been busily pestering all two of their industry inside sources. Despite this lackluster effort (and their eventual dismissal) they have unearthed some very interesting developments.

RUMOR→ Intel is going to ship their 1100Mhz processor as early as February 2000 or thereabouts
WHY IT WON'T HAPPEN: Processor manufacturers like Intel make a fortune by incrementally releasing faster processors. They get you suckers to buy a 233, 333, and then a 450 when they could have easily jumped straight to a 500. It's ruthless, but it's the way they do business and have for years
WHY IT WILL HAPPEN: For the first time in modern computing history Intel does not have the most powerful chip. The AMD Athlon kicks its ass in every way and has been included in nearly every manufacturers' PC. Intel is nervous and wants to retake its place on top
PCXL TAKE: Our best guess is that they won't actually have the monster 1100Mhz available until early summer of 2000, and it will come with the all-new super-bloated Windows 2000 to make sure that performance isn't much better than that of a 450Mhz right now. Pure evil indeed

RUMOR→ That Sony is going to release a PlayStation 2 video card for the PC three or four months after they release the console in the US
WHY IT WON'T HAPPEN: Sony is a console company and they make a killing doing it. Releasing a card for the PC seriously cuts into potential buyers. Plus, Sony wouldn't be able to get any royalties from software companies, which is where they make a large portion of their gazillions of dollars
WHY IT WILL HAPPEN: Sony loses money on hardware sales – a lot of it, and they make a great deal of money on first party software. By expanding their market they will be able to sell more software and hardware without the same manufacturing costs of putting together an entire console
PCXL TAKE: About as likely as Shigeru Miyamoto doing Mario for the PlayStation 2 (or for the non-console savvy: As likely as you sleeping with Heidi Klum)

RUMOR→ Microsoft's rumored first attempt in the console business, the mysteriously titled X-Box, is a bunch of hooey. They are actually making a super powerful 3D card for the PC that will only run games using the amazing new version of Direct3D (tenatively titled: D3DX). They also plan to charge a $2 licensing fee to anyone using their API
WHY IT WON'T HAPPEN: Because we made this all up after four beers on the night before deadline – or did we?
WHY IT WILL HAPPEN: Because whenever we make shit like this up it tends to come true. We really don't know why and quite frankly we're afraid to ask
PCXL TAKE: Makes a helluva lot more sense than Microsoft trying to get into the already crowded console business

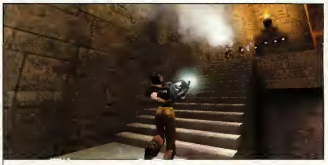
Microsoft
Intellimouse Explorer

PRICE → $74.95
WEBSITE → www.microsoft.com
BUNDLE → None

If the laws of nature allowed the Intellimouse Explorer to grow legs and don a wedding gown, we would marry it. Really, it's just that good. Our sex lives might suffer, but, frankly, women never made our *Quake* scores rise like this.

Microsoft has quite literally reinvented the mouse by replacing all the moving parts (including the dust- and dirt-gathering roller ball) with an optical sensor that provides pinpoint accuracy on any type of surface. That's right, you can throw out that mouse pad — it'll work just as well on your desk, your leg, someone else's leg, or any other surface you can think of. You can even use it upside down if you want. And because it's been castrated (ahem, ball-less), it won't pick up the hair and grime that gunks up most mice, ensuring a smooth glide forever.

Otherwise, the Intellimouse Explorer is similar to the standard Intellimouse (same shape, two front buttons and wheel), but adds an extra two programmable side buttons. Microsoft has also jumped off the creamy white bandwagon and released the Explorer in stylin' metallic gray (the color of choice for all new computer peripherals, it seems). But, and this is the best part, the optical sensor emits a blood-red glow, just like Knight Rider's KITT, but, fortunately, without the prissy William Daniels voiceovers.



With this mouse, Chuck improved some six frags per Q3 game

The extravagant price point is likely to turn away casual users, but for the hardcore gamer who wants the absolute best gaming mouse on the market, there's no better investment than this great option that expands an impressive peripheral line-up.

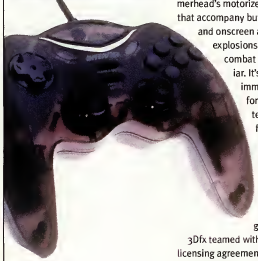
RATING 10

Pluses
→ Unsurpassed precision
→ Cool design

Minuses
→ Umm ...
→ Refused our marriage proposal

Interact/3Dfx
HammerHead FX

PRICE → $39.99
WEBSITE → www.interact-acc.com
BUNDLE → Descent 3 Sol Ascent



If you've ever played with Nintendo's Rumble Pack or Sony's Dual Shock pads, then the Hammerhead's motorized vibrations that accompany button pushes and onscreen action like explosions, collisions, and combat will feel familiar. It's not nearly as immersive as the force-feedback technology found in joysticks and steering wheels, but it's the closest you're going to get in a gamepad.

3Dfx teamed with Interact in a licensing agreement to use their brand name to help sell product. But let's get down to business — this is one great pad. Even if it didn't have rumble feedback, it would still get our recommendation just for being a solid, well-built controller that is as comfortable as any pad on the market. Imagine a marriage between Sony's Dual Shock controller for the PlayStation and the Microsoft Sidewinder pad and you'll have the HammerHead FX. It features the now-classic black Batarang design, the regular eight-way digital direction D-pad, two stubby analog sticks, and ten programmable buttons (six on the face, two on the shoulders, and two triggers underneath). Two AAA batteries are required, but a DC power jack is included (but no adaptor) if you plan on rockin' the night away. The HH is a progressive blending of technologies that isn't revolutionary, but long overdue.

But game support for the pad's grumbles is very limited — not even the bundled *Descent 3: Sol Ascent* (a shortened version of the full game) fully supports it. Only EA's *NFSIII* supports any rumble effect despite the Profiler software including presets for *Incoming*, *NBA Live '99*, and *FIFA '99*. The omission of a fully configured preset for the pack-in *Descent* game is simply unforgiveable. Bottom line: The pad is a good one in its own right, but forthcoming rumble feedback support may be spotty, or even nonexistent.

RATING 7

Pluses
→ Sturdy design
→ Fully programmable

Minuses
→ Rumble feedback nearly nonexistent
→ Botched bundle

Interact
Real Feel Pool Shark

PRICE → $29.99
WEBSITE → www.mlacomet.com
BUNDLE → Ultimate 8-Ball (full version)

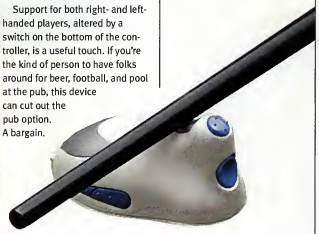
Before I got down to using this thing, I was so ready to rave about the great party possibilities of Miacomet's pool game controller. Fundamentally, it's a must-have add-on for any pool enthusiast at an incredibly affordable price. This mouse-like controller features four buttons and an indent with a roller that lets you use a real cue (or the cheap effort included in the box) to play accurate shots in games like THQ's *Ultimate 8-Ball* and Psygnosis' *Expert Pool*.

Unfortunately, this USB device is a temperamental beast. With no software drivers, your success with it lies in the lap of the adaptability of your game of choice. In *Expert Pool*, the game's load screen recognizes the controller and lets you select support for it, but that support proved to be shaky at best. Every single axis was screwed — in other words, whichever direction you pushed the device to line up a shot, it moved in some other direction (up was left, down was right, etc.).

With the bundled *Ultimate 8-ball* (a full game, with controller for full game price is a bargain in itself), the stick worked perfectly. Aligning shots was a breeze, and the quality of execution was down purely to my ability, and not any issues with the controller.

Support for both right- and left-handed players, altered by a switch on the bottom of the controller, is a useful touch. If you're the kind of person to have folks around for beer, football, and pool at the pub, this device can cut out the pub option. A bargain.

In case you're too frightened to go to the pool hall ...



RATING 7

Pluses
→ Cheap and great bundle
→ Great concept

Minuses
→ Non-specific game support
→ Roller feels clunky

Microsoft SideWinder
Game Pad Pro

PRICE → $44.95
WEBSITE → www.microsoft.com/hardware
BUNDLE → None

Sometimes, it's better to leave well enough alone. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then Microsoft must be blushing over the many copies of its original Sidewinder Game Pad. But, instead of improving on the original design, Microsoft has instead detoured considerably with their lightweight silver-gray update, the Sidewinder Game Pad Pro.

First of all, it's a USB-only pad, which means in part that it doesn't have that handy built-in joystick port allowing gamers to daisy-chain extra controllers together. Sure, you can just plug an extra one into your spare USB port, but you'll need a USB hub to handle a group of friends in a crunch 4-player *NHL 2000* match-up.

Secondly, the D-pad has been turned slightly to the right, so that pressing forward follows the natural direction of your thumb instead of straight ahead. While this sounds oh-so-ergonomic in theory, gaming veterans will feel inclined to move diagonally until they can retrain themselves to use the pad properly. Smooth and squishy, the D-pad supports both digital (standard eight directions) and proportional (joystick-like) control. Its mushiness makes the pad suitable for games like *Descent 3*, but digital control isn't precise enough.

On the bright side, a shift button located next to the D-pad gives each of the eight buttons a dual purpose, allowing for a total of 16 programmable buttons. But, the original Sidewinder's Start button has been dropped, so you'll have to go back to the keyboard for games using it. Given how pricey it is, get the Pro only if you need proportional control or USB support. Otherwise, the original Sidewinder still rules.

RATING 6

Pluses
→ 16 programmable buttons
→ Adds proportional control

Minuses
→ Dubious ergonomic design
→ No precise digital control

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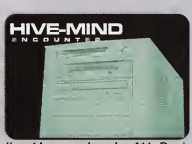

ALIENWARE™

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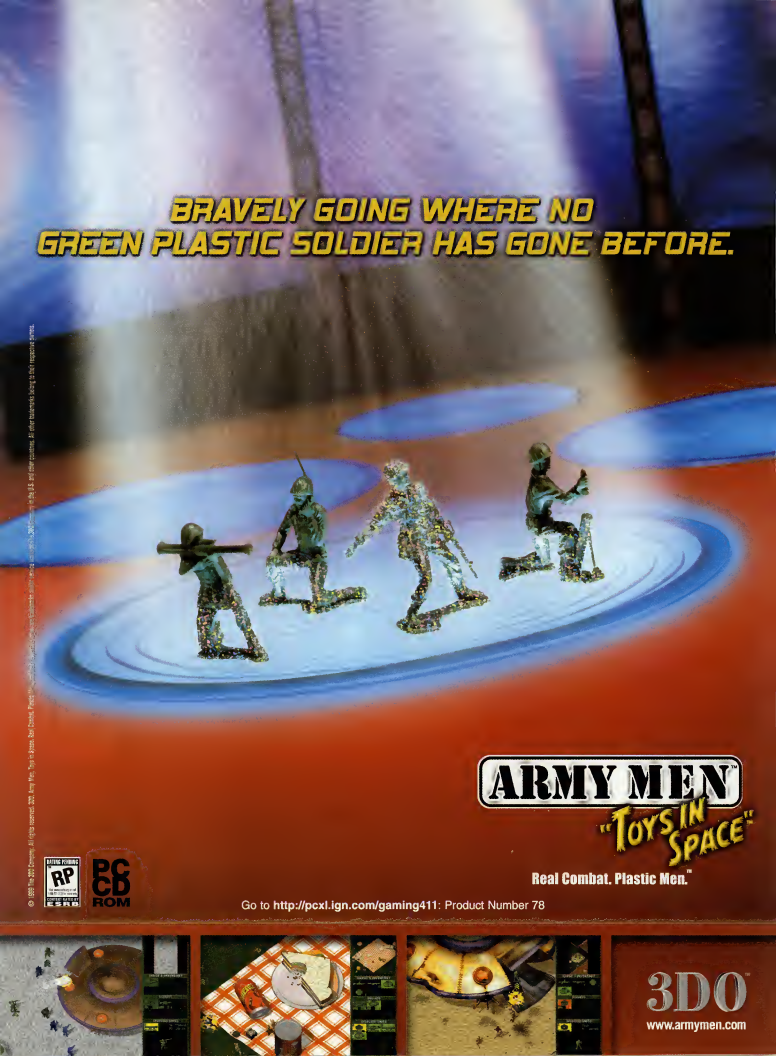
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REVIEWS

We tell you who's been naughty or nice

We made our list, we checked it twice, you better damned well believe we know who's been naughty or nice. Check out pages 128-131. In the true spirit of Christmas PCXL has compiled over 160 reviews — an entire year's worth of games to stuff in your stocking. Find out which ones we use to clean up reindeer poop and which ones we'd have Saint Nick deliver to your door if he wasn't some childish fairy tale. As the year goes on the games just seem to get better, and coming from our cynical (and quite black) hearts, that's saying something. *AOE II* is causing deadline problems, *Prince Of Persia 3D* is full of problems, and *Nocturne*'s only problem is nobody has heard of it. See for yourself which games you should keep for yourself and which you should give to your bratty nephew in Iowa.

This game redefines "booty-ness."

NAUGHTY

You know how it goes .. the game makers do their thing, and at the end of the year a mysterious authority figure decides their fate. We nominate ourselves for this duty. These, in our humble opinions, were the bad ones

CUTTHROATS
Publisher --> Eidos
Developer --> Hothouse
Rating --> 3
How bad is it? Ahoy! Another even worse pirate sim? Tell us it isn't so! Really, we went easy on this one, easily one of the most ass-tastic games of the year. Get another eye patch to look at this crap

PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D
Publisher --> Microprose
Developer --> Red Orb
Rating --> 3
How bad is it? It took Microprose 10 years to come up with this, a sequel that isn't half as fun or playable as its predecessors. How do you do that — even if you tried?

MINESWEEPER
Publisher --> Microsoft
Developer --> A guy
Rating --> 1
How bad is it? Every computer in the world has it and nobody plays it. Solitaire, Freecell, and Hearts are all solid games but *Minesweeper* sucks. Replace it with a decent game or no one will buy Windows! again – yeah, right.

NICE

And the games that made, this, our "nice" list, are getting more than a lump of coal — they'll be getting a solemn promise from us. We promise to not make fun of their games next year — yeah right

HOMEWORLD
Publisher --> Sierra
Developer --> Relic
Rating --> 9
How good is it? Here's the game that comes closest to duplicating the imaginary space battles with Star Wars toys you had as a kid. Don't tell us we were the only ones who had imaginary space battles

AGE OF EMPIRES II
Publisher --> Microsoft
Developer --> Ensemble
Rating --> 9
How good is it? This is the game that comes closest to duplicating the intense battles of the classic board game Cross-bows and Catapaults. Don't tell us we were the only geeks who played that

NOCTURNE
Publisher --> GOD
Developer --> Terminal Reality
Rating --> 8
How good is it? It's the game that comes closest to duplicating the imaginary haunted houses you thought up as a kid. Don't tell us we were the only ones who ... oh, never mind

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

... Lords a Leapin' for joy, cause this game is so damn perfect — 10
... Ladies Dancing completely naked, doing a Demi Moore impression — 9
... Maids a milking partially naked. What they're milking is our business — 8
... Swans a-swimming through a lake of mediocrity — 7
... Geese a-laying not quite golden eggs — but still digestible — 6
... Golden Rings And what the hell do you do with those? Basically useless — 5
... Calling Birds making crank calls, saying, "Your game sucks" — 4
... French Hens (the runts that couldn't even make the KFC cut) — 3
... Turtle Doves that peck your eyes out they're so pissed at this game — 2
... And a Partridge in a Pear Tree that takes a crap on your game — 1

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Heed our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator; how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

ACCELE-RATED

In this little box you'll find out all you need to know about the 3D-ness of the game. We'll talk about different cards, problems, and specifics to help you decide if the game is right for your system. Also you can use this to decide what kind of system you need to play the games you want to. Occasionally we'll also throw in dirty words and helpful life advice.

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often and how long you find yourself playing a game are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING

Killer game!

DEVELOPER	Relic
PUBLISHER	Sierra
REQUIRED	P300, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard drive
IDEAL	PII 500, 128MB RAM, 600MB hard drive, mouse with mousewheel, LAN, Voodoo3 3500

Homeworld

If this game had the Star Wars license, it would be almost too good

ACCELE-RATED

The software mode is serviceable, but to appreciate the detail of the graphics you want a top of the line card — a TNT2 Ultra, G400 Max or Voodoo3 3500.

Everyone in the room who liked Battlestar Galactica, Star Wars, or anything else involving spaceships raise your hand. OK — now, with the other hand, write a note to yourself: "Note to self: Go out and get *Homeworld*."

You've got the future of your race in a giant ship that's bigger than the Love Boat and the Enterprise put together, and your planet has just been jacked by a malevolent alien race. Sounds like a good premise — at least as good as "Lost in Space" anyway. But seriously folks, *Homeworld* makes realtime strategy games seem like they have a future.

Space is big ... really big

Homeworld is a RTS, and the gameplay is structured in the traditional manner: Harvest resources, micro-manage units, climb a tech tree, build defenses, and attack. But instead of the playing field being a 2D top-down tiled map, *Homeworld*'s battlefields are vast expanses of empty space — spheres, to be precise.

Developers Relic opened things up by creating a true third dimension to the arenas, and this reveals a whole slew of new tactical and strategic possibilities. Since your ships, especially the capital ships, don't move very fast, it can take quite a while to get them from one end of space to the other, which creates a great sense of anticipation as your massive armada silently heads for the enemy mothership.

Camera ... Action

In any type of 3D game, especially in a RTS where you need control and awareness of many different units at once, having an intuitive and powerful camera interface is vitally important. This key feature has been well thought out, starting with focusing the camera (middle mouse button or F key) on a ship or group of ships that you select in the traditional way of clicking or click-dragging. When the camera is focused, you can rotate it by holding down the right mouse button, and zoom in and out with the mousewheel (or by holding down both buttons if you don't have one). That's basically it. It's streamlined so well that before long it becomes second nature.

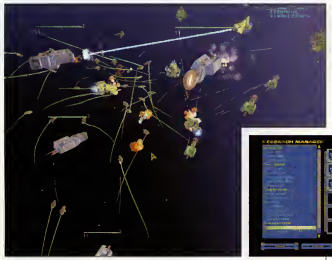
As it went up in a ball of fire, the mothership's life flashed before its eyes.

The Basics

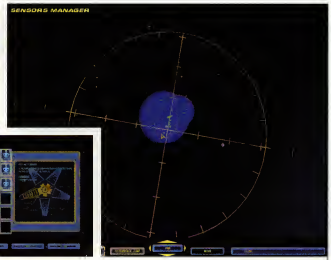
In single-player, the long term goal is to build up and equip a large enough batallion to get revenge on the alien fleet that destroyed your world and also find your mythic homeworld.

The game is divided into 16 missions; you must fulfill certain important story-pushing objectives before you can hyperspace on to the next one. Of course, you will run into some aliens who want a piece of you, and these buggers will make life helluva tough.

And really, the single-player is way challenging even for a seasoned RTS veteran. Since the fleet you create is persistent from one mission to the next, too many mistakes early on will make it difficult or even impossible to make it through the later missions, since the resources are fixed and become increasingly scarce. This is really a great idea, and almost single-handedly creates great replay value for the single-player game. The next time around, you'll try different tactics to get to the later missions, better equipped with more ships.



All this fuss about who destroyed whose home planet. Who started this fight anyway?



Green dots = good. Red dots = bad. Brown dots = could be either. Guess you'll have to find out for yourself, won't you?

Ships

There's a whole mess of ships in this game, and they're divided by class into fighters, corvettes, capital, and super-heavy. Of course, they're all there to protect the mothership, cuz that's what the game's all about. The fighters buzz like little bugs around the bigger ships — but they can be incredibly effective in skilled hands.

The corvettes are basically support and utility ships, and have specialized functions like the minelayer, which is great for defense, and the all-important salvage corvette, which you will always need. The single-player game can be won (in the hardest difficulty levels) by salvaging most, if not all, the enemy ships you encounter instead of destroying them. The costly and tough capital and super-heavy ships are the backbone of your fleet.

The design of the ships on both sides is superb. They seem completely believable and solid against the silent void of deep space. And then you've got things like sensor arrays, gravity wells, research ships, and of course, the resource collectors. Every ship has a particular function and there's not a lot of redundancy or arbitrary padding of units just to add a nice big number to the box copy.

Combat

After you build all your fancy new ships, you're going to want to use them. To keep them organized you can assign them into preset groups, usually divided by function or class. Then, you decide which of the 10 formations to put them in. The choices are varied and effective enough in combat to make this an important tactical consideration. For fighters, a claw formation will make them overlap fields of fire quite effectively, while for capital ships, a wall formation will maximize their overall coverage potential.

Speaking of coverage (the amount of space around a ship that it can attack at any given time) ... this will also come into play in your tactics. The powerful Ion Cannon Frigate has a tiny coverage of 3% with its single beam attack, while the Multi Gun Corvette has a coverage of 74% with its five independently tracking turrets. Sheer numbers is never a guarantee of victory, as the full range of 3D movement lets you skillfully maneuver your groups to attack ships when they are in weak positions. Timing, creativity, and mobility are going to distinguish the skilled players from the "tank rushers" of traditional RTS games. In true RTS fashion, however, the game still requires the micro-management skills of a corporate CEO, and can overwhelm you at times when there's a lot going on. This is why you want to group up your units.

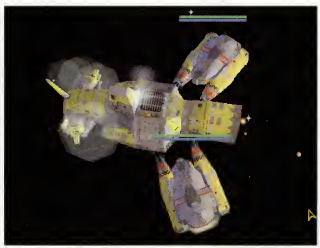
Multiplayer

The single-player game will prepare your tactical mind for some multiplayer *Homeworld* — this is where the game really comes into its own. With limited resources, mobile ships, and particularly the ability to hyperspace your fleet, your mothership will always be in danger — especially since it doesn't do any fighting and it's slow as all get-out. (For much more on multiplayer and combat strategy, check out this month's strategy section, pg. 122-125).

So What's the Big Deal?

These days, when games are becoming increasingly marketing driven and cookie cutter, it's great to see a game that was created from a strong vision. *Homeworld* actually innovates, and doesn't underestimate the intelligence of its players, while still remaining really fun. If you think RTS is a dead genre, or that *Tiberian Sun* failed to add anything original to the format, check out *Homeworld*. They made it look easy, and that's saying a lot.

— ED LEE *likes this game mainly cuz he wins at it*



At this point, I'd rather be salvaging.

GRAPHICS

Simply great. The textures are detailed and well done, and everything just fits together well.

SOUND

A superior ambient soundtrack, voice samples, and ship sounds combine to make an engaging atmosphere.

DEPTH

The ships are well balanced and the single player is more than challenging. Multiplayer is terrific.

DESIGN

Inspired, with plenty of attention to detail and style to burn. The presentation, from the Yes music to the cutscenes, oozes class.

RATING 9

Pluses

- → Your cure for RTS jadedness
- → Everything feels motivated
- → Addictive as hell

Minuses

- → Tons of micro-management
- → Single player a bit too short
- → Not enough to bitch about

Lorne Greene of Battlestar Galactica was also in a movie called *Voxectomy: A Delicate Matter*

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DEVELOPER →	GameFX
PUBLISHER →	THQ
REQUIRED →	PII 233, 32MB RAM, 400MB hard drive, DirD card, 4X CD
IDEAL →	PII 300, 64MB RAM, AGP 3D card, flight stick, 12X CD-ROM, 3D sound card

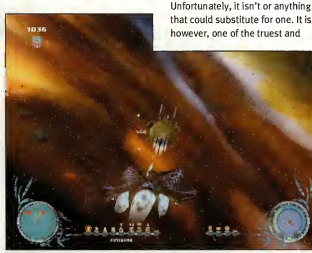
Sinistar: Unleashed

Like an L.A. actress — hot-looking and easy, but not much "up top"

ACCELE-RATED

Sinistar features sharp graphics that run smoothly even at 32-bit color in higher resolutions, and the eye candy is top-notch all around.

It's slick, it's gorgeous, looks great in the dark, and loves to get right to the hard and fast action with no pretense for small talk. If *Sinistar: Unleashed* were a woman, she'd be my dream date. Unfortunately, it isn't or anything that could substitute for one. It is, however, one of the truest and most effective classic coin-op revamps around.



There are a number of different *Sinistars*, this is merely one of them for your shooting enjoyment.

Succeeding where Activision's *Asteroids* re-make failed, *Sinistar* takes the very simple thrust and gun gameplay that these games thrived on and places it squarely inside a hyper eye-candified 3D engine. It's not simply the old game with better graphics, as was the case with *Asteroids*. This is a fully 3D, six degrees of motion shooter, but no one's going to mistake it for *Independence War*. A sim this ain't. Hell, it's not even an in-depth arcade space combat game like *Wing Commander, Freespace 2*, and the myriad others. This game is pretty much just about the visceral pleasure of destroying bad stuff while grabbing power-ups, which enable you to destroy bigger bad stuff.

The story has something to do with you, Bad-ass Pilot #1, being stranded in a probe ship and a nearby huge Warp Gate being built by some nasty aliens. If the Gate gets finished, a *Sinistar* (the mother of all bad things, and a chatty bastard to boot) will come through it and wreak serious havoc. You have two choices: Try to destroy the Gate before the *Sinistar* arrives, or for added fun, wait for the *Sinistar* to arrive, then destroy it.

Both tactics require you to acquire energy crystals by blowing up asteroids so that you have enough power to wail away on the gate or pummel the *Sinistar* with bombs. There are lots of smaller enemy craft flying around, too, and most of them are trying to shoot you, but some gather energy crystals for the gate. Once you get the hang of the game (gather crystals, bomb gate, repeat), it goes from incredibly hard to extremely easy in no time.

Control is best with a joystick, while game pads are atrocious. Throughout *Sinistar*, you also gather power-ups that provide various weapons like missiles, a concussion explosion weapon, and electrical strikes, all of which use crystal energy. Health is also recharged by crystals, so as long as you're picking up them up, you basically never die. Unless you do something stupid — like sit still.

Graphically, the game looks as good as any of the other space sims out there — which is to say, really damn good. So good, you'll wish they had made a deeper game to take advantage of the great looking ships, rocks, explosions, and lighting effects. But they didn't. What we're left with is a perfect game to pick up and play occasionally when you need to kill some time and blow away bad things. And even if it doesn't do much else, *Sinistar: Unleashed* does that really well.

— JASON D'APRILE *is having a really bad day so don't ask him for a witty bio*

GRAPHICS

Sharp, slick, smooth, and great looking. Deep space sure is pretty.

SOUND

Deep, booming explosions and weapon effects, a really good soundtrack and, of course, "I LIVE!" The different *Sinistars* even have different voices.

DEPTH

Er ... depth? Blow up bad things. Blow them up real good!

DESIGN

Features 24 levels, including "mission-driven" bonus levels. Lots of mindless, entertaining action.

RATING 8

Pluses

- Great graphics and sound
- Simple, accessible playability focusing on lots of action
- A well-done revamp with great technology

Minuses

- Will likely bore you
- Very repetitive, simple gameplay gets old fast
- May leave your hand numb after a few hours

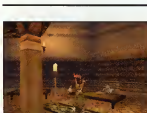
DEVELOPER --> Red Orb Entertainment
PUBLISHER --> Mindscape
REQUIRED --> P333, 64MB RAM, 300MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, D3D compatible video card
IDEAL --> PII 300, 128MB RAM, Aureal Vortex2, a vial of crack, a lobotomy

Prince of Persia 3D

Hmm ... play this or impale yourself on a pit of spikes? Choose the spikes

ACCELE-RATED

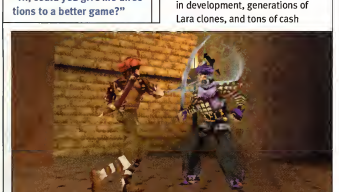
A Voodoo3 or TNT2 will get best results. However, the Voodoo2's graphic "wash out" could brighten the game. How about a nice walk in the park instead?



"Hi, could you give me directions to a better game?"

If you remember nothing else from this issue, remember this: Don't buy *Prince of Persia 3D*. Ignore that "3" rating below — *POP3D* might not get a Suicide Award, but it deserves far worse. Unlike expected abominations (like *Skydive!*), this game's evil is so horribly insidious, so persistent, so pervasive, that it requires a whole new award — the **PCXL** "Mass Murder."

If it had come out before *Tomb Raider 1*, itself a 3D homage to the original *Prince of Persia*, the game's lack of ambition might be overlooked. But after three years in development, generations of Lara clones, and tons of cash thrown willy-nilly into a pit of despair, this little *Prince* emerges as a simple 3D translation of the first game — nothing more and a whole lot less. The story remains the same: The Princess is kidnapped and you, as the Prince, dodge trap after deadly trap to save her. Or, more accurately, die a cheap death and hit auto-load.



In this game, AI means "Activated Intermittently." As long as they don't notice you, the bad guys are indestructible.

After several of these "cut" scenes, you won't care about the story.

The first issue is the murky darkness (almost as if Red Orb were trying to hide the lackluster castle and dungeon environments), which clashes violently with the garish characters and pastel-hued lighting. The boxed instructions claim that brightness and contrast are adjustable via the Options menu, but upon opening the game CD's readme file, you find that you'll have to manually change those settings on your monitor. Unforgivable! Most of the graphics are pleasant, if not detailed, but effects like waterfalls are amateurishly pixelicious.

One of the original *POP*'s hallmarks was the beautiful roto-scoped animation that accompanied every every move. The same dogged attention was paid to the plodding animations in *POP3D*, much to the detriment of gameplay. Every action is an exercise in lead-footed frustration. The combat system alone will drive a man to drink Drano.

Weapons include a sword, staff, double blades, and a bow, but given the combat situation, it doesn't really matter which melee weapon you pick. There are magical arrows, but the most lethal type is something I call "the arrow of crashing." When killed by these, the game crashes back to the desktop ... more of a favor than a bug. No matter how much the nostalgia bug bites, remember: There is no fun in *Prince of Persia 3D*.

— **CHUCK OSBORN** *isn't too picky when choosing review games*

NO FUN (IN POP3D)

Ladies and gentlemen of th. PCXL class of 1999, I have one piec. of advice for you. No matter what a retail.r tl.s you, there is no fun in *Prince of Persia 3D*. Oh it's ass alright, but you don't want ass, you want fun. And there is no fun in *POP3D*.

Don't walk on bridges, fun. Sure, they may look sturdy, but when it collapses, your middle-eastern ass gets splattered all over the concrete.

If a princess tells you she's made of 250,000 polygons, she's made out of 250. If she tells you she's made out of 250 and looks like she's 250, she's a bitmap.

Young Persian men, if you see a switch ... use it. They don't put it there otherwise. Ain't never been a switch made that you're not supposed to push, pull, or slide.

Health potion — nothin' wrong with that!

No matter what you think of what I'm sayin', I remember this one thing — there is no fun in *POP3D*.

[sing] No fun in *POP3D*, no fun in *POP3D*, no fun in *POP3D*, there is absolut.ly, positively no fun in *POP3D*.

If a game takes three years to make, it's not that good. A good game is too fun ... to be a programmer. If you see a crate — it probably needs to be pushed.

Here's a trap strategy for everyone: Spikes! You gonna die. Grinding gears! You gonna die. Swinging blades! You gonna die ... in pieces. Spears! You gonna die. Collapsing room! You gonna die. Eh.

Some of the things I've said may not apply to you, some may offend you, but no matter who you are, you must remember this one thing: There is no fun in *POP3D*.

GRAPHICS

Imagine Bram Stoker's *Aladdin* starring Tinky Winky ... but darker

SOUND

The expected Arabian-esque muzak and clanging trap sounds.

DEPTH

Run. Die from spikes. Auto-load. Run. Head lopped off. Auto-load. Repeat.

DESIGN

A triumph of style over substance, *POP3D* can't hurdle the biggest pitfall of all — poor control.

RATING 3

Pluses

- Auto-loading is fast
- Colors not found in nature
- Decent sound

Minuses

- Hand-me-down level design
- Frustrating control
- A waste of three years

DEVELOPER --> Sinister Games
PUBLISHER --> Ubi Soft
REQUIRED --> P200 MMX, 32MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM drive, 310MB hard drive, 4MB 3D accelerator card
IDEAL --> PII 266, 64MB RAM, 593MB hard drive

Shadow Company

Hey, you've got your *Myth* in my *Jagged Alliance 2*!

ACCELE-RATED

A lack of software mode is a surprise for a game with low system specs. Still a Voodoo2 or TNT will satisfy the limited exertion placed on your 3D hardware

Here's where you plan.

What a winning idea. Combine the free-floating camera of *Myth* with the best elements of realtime strategy games and the squad level command-style of Eidos' *Commandos*. How could it miss? Well, it did — but not by much. In many respects *Shadow Company* is a triumph. Unfortunately, control problems keep this from being a killer game.

Shadow Company straps you into the boots of an elite force of mercenaries who have been dispatched to Angola. An ambush by Angolan rebels leaves your group almost wiped out and abandoned for dead by the company that was supposed to be paying your bills and watching your back. So you decide to get the hell out and treat yourself to some high-caliber revenge on your former employers.

Progressing through the game you'll be contacted by another mercenary corporation and offered assignments to build up your squad and equipment. Missions take place in nine different countries, each one played on a 3D-rendered battlefield where you order your mercs in the manner of an RTS. Controlling the camera lets you zoom to any portion of the battlefield, from close-up shots to far overhead, giving you a better strategic view.

Just another day at the NRA's summer campground.

Gas prices went up three seconds after these tanks blew up.

At first glance, everything seems to be on track to make this game great. The graphics are terrific. The 3D engine isn't the most advanced on the block and gets a little pixelicious up close, but the characters look way cool and are impressively detailed, including mercs holding different types of guns. The movement and character AI is excellent, missions are well designed, and the game can be approached from several different tactical perspectives.

But alas, *Shadow Company* falls down because of its absolutely horrible control scheme. First off, the free-floating camera tends to slide around too fast. It's difficult to achieve the right angle of the action and it can be even tougher to move back to the action when your units are in trouble. Selecting characters can also be difficult, as they are often unresponsive.

These idle bastards need shepherding every 50 feet, rather than moving longer distances on their own. When traveling in narrow areas they can get stuck in walls. The morons even fall off bridges while trying to walk on air. Vehicle control is weird too. Rather than responding to the mouse, vehicles are driven using the keyboard, leading to awkward two-handed contortions to control cars, boats, and the camera simultaneously.

Still, *Shadow Company* is a lot of fun. It's too bad the control scheme is such a glaring problem that it shamefully detracts from that fun.

— ALLEN RAUSCH *enjoys showing people his "Shadow Puppet"*

GRAPHICS
Excellent, but things get a little pixelated in close-up views.

SOUND
Excellent, very atmospheric. FMV mission actor is a weasel.

DEPTH
Plenty. Much like Eidos' *Commandos*, you'll really need to think before you swing into action.

DESIGN
The missions are fun and well-designed, but the control scheme screws everything up.

RATING

Pluses
--> Good 3D Engine
--> Well-designed missions
--> Great character design

Minuses
--> Some cheesy FMV acting
--> Control problems
--> Camera control is awkward and frustrating

The phases of the moon are caused by the shadow of the Earth as it moves through its orbit

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MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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DEVELOPER -->	GOD
PUBLISHER -->	Terminal Reality
REQUIRED -->	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL -->	PIII 500 (or Athlon), 128MB RAM, 1.2GB hard drive, 32MB TNT2 Ultra or G400 Max, 3D sound

Nocturne

When the lights go out, things start to go bump in the night

ACCELE-RATED

A Matrox G400 Max is ideal, allowing beautiful, 3D-accelerated, 1280x1024 res. A software mode is supported, and Voodoo owners can run the game in 32-bit color.

Theodore Roosevelt allegedly killed a werewolf in 1898 during the Spanish-American war in Cuba. By 1902 he'd formed Spookhouse, an undercover organization hidden away from the public eye with the mission to keep the monsters of the supernatural and paranormal worlds at bay. Kind of a pre-cursor to the "X-Files," the star operative of Spookhouse (the Fox Mulder of the operation) is The Stranger.

This man with no name, dark glasses rather than a cigar, and a flowing gray trenchcoat (instead of a poncho) speaks in a forceful, deep, monotone, revealing only a steely, focused personality — he's almost certainly never told a "knock-knock" joke. Not surprising, since there's little room for comedy when all the denizens of the paranormal underworld are out to drink your blood, rip you limb from limb, push, pull and impale you and even smash you with parts of their own anatomy. Of course, as the stoic Stranger, there's a cathartic pleasure in lopping the arm from a shambling zombie, picking up its severed limb, then smacking him in the face with the soggy end.

A typical night out with your sidekick, dinner and a porno.

"Well, it's not exactly how I envisioned my first three-some to play out, but ..."

"Hi! Welcome to Victoria's Secret. Can I help you find something?"

That's only a small sample of the gruesome punishment you'll face as you delve into the gritty core of the four sprawling acts that comprise the horror adventure *Nocturne*. Starting with a fight against vampires and werewolves in a German forest, village, and castle, you'll face zombies in Redeye, Texas, the zombie mobsters of Al Capone in Chicago, and demonic imps and skeletons in the outskirts of Paris. You'll impale them on spikes, shoot them with silver bullets from tommy guns, blow them to bits with dynamite, immolate them, then behead and dismember them. Such is the life of the primo monster hunter working for the government.

Beginning in 1927 at the Spookhouse HQ, mission briefings are presented in game engine cutscenes. Here, The Stranger gets to meet the other operatives of this underground organization, including the abrupt (and amply bosomed) Elspeth "Doc" Holliday and Moloch, a demon fighting for the good guys. All of the voice acting is fantastic. I was expecting cheesy dialog or campy over-acting — instead it's consistent, actually helps establish the characters, and though used sparingly, always offers just enough information to keep you going.

Nocturne is a very mature game in content (occasional blaspheming, plenty of gore, and a sanitized "family friendly" option), as well as in expectation of what the gamer has to do. There's very little hand-holding in the early game as you get used to the static flip-screen format this 3D action/adventure uses. Should you decide to leave the HQ for the first mission (which you are free to do whenever you like) without visiting some of the other characters, you'll miss out on picking up various weapons and doctor's bags (health kits) that will make the subsequent quest much easier. While in most missions directions are supplied at each crucial cut point with well-directed non-interactive scenes, you also have to think for yourself in nearly every situation. Blundering through the game, ignoring the unfolding plot lines, or not listening to instructions can be fatal.

Part of the problem with the learning curve is the size of some of the areas. Each act is split into a number of different "levels" — essentially individual quests (i.e.,

finding your way to the speakeasy in act three and surviving the raid). They require a simple break point to allow smaller chunks of the finely detailed environments to be loaded. Upon completing these sub-quests you get a body count and time score (though exploration is what you'll spend most of your time doing so the clock barely matters). Without a map function or specific directions, it's up to you to explore, often uncovering new areas by accident. Just when you've given up on finding a certain building or tunnel, you'll stumble on an alleyway or corridor you'd missed, and you'll be back on course.

Navigation through the game world can be confusing for a couple of reasons. First, though the mouse/keyboard combo worked for me, the auto-targeting option seemed useful, but bizarrely caused the Stranger to spend many stretches of the game running with his head facing the ground or looking up at the ceiling. More importantly, the game is too damn dark.

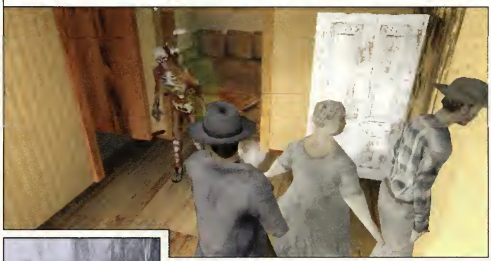
A monitor calibration tool lets you set the game up to play in the pitch dark. This is certainly the best way to play *Nocturne*, since under these conditions the 32-bit color is vibrant, the light sources cast beautiful dancing shadows, and the atmosphere is suitably foreboding. Still, it's not always possible to have these perfect conditions. In normal daylight (or with the lights on) it's necessary to crank the monitor's brightness level incredibly high — but then with the washed-out color, it's easy to miss subtly lighter or darker areas that indicate where you should be heading.

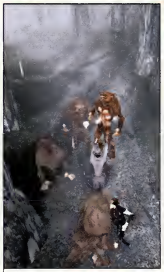
In its perfect setup, *Nocturne* is without a doubt the best-looking game on the market. Though also requiring the highest system specs on the market to achieve these effects, the texture detail is incredible, the realtime flickering light sources are amazing, and it features the best fire effects (in both explosions and simple candles) ever seen in a game. Terminal Reality's much-touted cloth animation system lets the Stranger's coat sway perfectly in the wind, and though on occasion the effect is overdone (especially when the camera is very close to the character), at a distance, the illusion is perfect.

"Alright Doc Hellahot, later is better than get away freak"

All that said, you need one of the top systems available to fully enjoy these features. Even on a PII 400 with 128MB RAM and a TNT2, there were significant choppy moments when there were multiple moving elements on screen (one swinging axe trap turned its amusing, yet blood-drenched destruction of a ghoul into a slow-motion slide show).

While *Nocturne*'s traps and puzzles fail to reinvent this style of adventure, the use of sidekicks in certain missions adds both character and strategy. There's the requisite "find several items, bring to one place, watch the effects" tricks, lever pulling, key finding and "smash the mirror before the door will open" stuff. The vampire Svetlana in the first mission proves a foil to the Stranger's reserved personality, establishing who this guy is, and why he's so





To be cliche, "Just keeping the wolves at bay."

Choose which caption best fits this picture: (1)"Beef ... It's what's for dinner." or (2) "Got milk?" Either way, it's obvious that *Nocturne* will not be endorsed by PETA.

Environmental touches such as real breath clouds and weather effects, including clouds drifting out of sight which actually change the shadows in the game. To sum it up: Pretty damn spooky.

PREZ CREDENTIALS

So Theo Roosevelt killed a werewolf in 1898 did he? You read it here, so it must be true. We dug up a few other "fascinating facts" about the men who've sat in the oval office

GEORGE WASHINGTON
EVENT → A leader among the vampire community, he wanted the New World to be home to his (undead) people
RESULT → Became a terrorist and led the illegal war against Britain to annex his domain

JAMES POLK
EVENT → Understanding Washington's legacy, he wanted to leave the East to the nightwalkers
RESULT → Fought Mexico and won 800,000 square miles of territory including the ceding of New Mexico and California

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
EVENT → With the ability to raise the dead, he wanted to ensure that his zombie hordes would be treated well in the new American society
RESULT → The Gettysburg Address original draft read "...that all men and zombies are created equal"

GEORGE BUSH
EVENT → Hyper-sensitive to vampires, Bush was investigating reports of Kasha (Japanese vampires who steal corpses from graves to feed on them) in senior government
RESULT → The aura was overwhelming and he puked on the Prime Minister of Japan

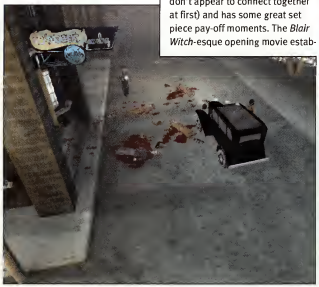
BILL CLINTON
EVENT → Investigating reports of blood-suckers among the White House staff, he wanted to personally vet every employee for fangs and sucking ability
RESULT → Monica Lewinsky

damn miserable. In act three, you enlist the help of another monster, Icepick, who you need to complete various tasks, and so have to keep him alive. This means ensuring that his hulking, lead-footed frame follows closely and doesn't get left behind where he is likely to be ambushed by Al Capone's "Frankenstein's mobsters" or run over by the marauding hit-and-run car drivers.

Despite its horror credentials, *Nocturne* failed to provide many heart-stopping terror moments. The music is very subdued, and aside from the short-lived performance by a cute lounge singer, there are few musical interludes to help build the atmosphere. Use of 3D sound certainly helps for sound cues — so use headphones to supplant the effect if you don't have the hardware.

Finally, *Nocturne* isn't a game for the masses, with its slow pace, steep system requirements, and lack of newbie help through the large levels. But, it is the perfect game to show off your high-end system. It has a story that spans several years (even if the acts don't appear to connect together at first) and has some great set piece pay-off moments. The *Blair Witch*-esque opening movie establishes its tone — and if that kind of cerebral horror melts your butter, *Nocturne* is sure to keep you up at night.

*— **ROB SMITH** was seeing imps of his own by the time he finished this review*



Like any night out in Chicago (and lately any day in grade school), a gun is an extremely useful ally.

GRAPHICS
The best. Though the character animation is a little static, the textures and detail are incredible.

SOUND
Subtle, understated, and a little too "stylish" rather than offering enough to set your mind and nerves on edge.

DEPTH
All characters have specific personalities that come out between the exploration trips. The web is tangled, and unraveling it takes time.

DESIGN
Many familiar puzzles presented in creative ways, using the awesome technology to great effect.

RATING 8

+ Pluses
- It's really purty
- Very deep gameplay
- Great use of technology

− Minuses
- High-end system required
- Slow and sometimes confusing
- Everything is too dark

http://www.pcxl.com PC ACCELERATOR December 1999 *Nocturne* was also a ballet composed by Delius (the first and last mention of ballet in PCXL)

DEVELOPER →	Codemasters
PUBLISHER →	Codemasters
REQUIRED →	P200, 32MB RAM, 55MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 3D accelerator
IDEAL →	PII 300, 64MB RAM, 400MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, TNT2/G400

TOCA 2: Touring Car Challenge

You can tell it's English cuz of the rain

ACCELE-RATED

Requiring a 3D accelerator seems overboard for what you get with the 3D power. Primary support in D3D meant that the TNT2 and G400 provided the smoothest car detail.

A good grid position eliminates traffic problems.

Cars have tremendous detail, with realistic track reflections.

Touring car racing is a pretty big deal in Europe, and in the UK in particular, from where *TOCA* developer/publishers Codemasters are planning their assault. In this game, drivers race souped-up family sedans such as the Audi A4, Honda Accord, Vauxhall Vectra, Volvo S40, and Ford Mondeo (all familiar to the primary European audience). The racing is more exciting than Formula One in that the narrow tracks and rampant tailgating for position lends itself to tighter finishes and impressive spills.

That's the real beauty of *TOCA 2*. Since the cars all perform fairly equally, and none of them reach Formula One speeds, there's less emphasis on the boring mechanical details of racecars, and more on the fun factor of the actual racing. Likewise, the six single-player tracks and 10 bonus tracks (unlocked through winning championship races) have few turns, plenty of straights, and lots of opportunities for overtaking and skidding out.

Still, for the more professional racing sim expert, cars can be configured with new tire sets, gear ratios, and suspension levels to ensure peak performance on the different tracks. While I'm a complete car technophobe, making changes to the gear ratios (particularly pushing the upper limit of sixth gear to get the fastest speed possible on tracks with long straights) became necessary to turn finishes in the pack (out of 16) to trips to the winner's podium.

Despite what you see here, it doesn't *always* rain in England.

Another factor to consider in any race, be it in the championship, single race mode, or in a time trial, is the weather. I can attest to the fact that UK weather stinks, but *TOCA 2* seems to take this to extremes. Nearly all the championship races I contested were in the rain, which naturally made control more difficult. Avoiding oversteering was the biggest control issue on all the tracks, even on the straights. On the expert difficulty level (the hardest of the three), you need precise control and perfect "feel" with the steering wheel in order to avoid spinning when hitting corners and accelerating out. A force feedback wheel helped, especially when in the middle of a pack of cars jockeying for position.

TOCA 2's opponent AI is generally excellent. And once the computer has been mastered, there are network options for two human and up to eight AI competitors (over IPX, serial, modem, and Internet). However, the matchmaking service Codemasters supplies requires you to leave your IP address and have random people dial in. No thanks.

Still, while the touring car championship concept might be a little quirky for the U.S., the racing is a damn sight more entertaining than Nascar's ovals. It's vastly playable, hugely entertaining, but lacking a few of the bits of spit-and-polish the U.S. market will demand.

— ROB SMITH *sang "Dan't Rain On My Parade" while writing this*

GRAPHICS

The most detailed advertising boards yet seen in a game. Crash damage shows up well in third-person.

SOUND

Forgettable menu tunes with typical (and sadly uninspiring) engine revs.

DEPTH

A steering wheel is a necessity. With it, you really get to feel the car's handling characteristics.

DESIGN

Good opponent AI makes for challenging races at the expert level.

RATING 6

Pluses

- → Genuinely fun racing
- → Just enough tracks
- → Numerous racing options

Minuses

- → It doesn't rain that much in England. Really!
- → Internet play not fully featured
- → Sprite-based in-car graphics

Now Interactive
At 25 years old, Emerson Fittipaldi is the youngest Formula One World Champion in history

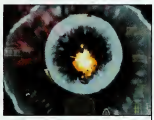
DEVELOPER --> Volition
PUBLISHER --> Interplay
REQUIRED --> P200, 32MB RAM, 400MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, DirectSound certified sound card, 3D accelerator
IDEAL --> PII 300, 64MB RAM, TNT2, Voodoo3, joystick, 3D sound card, 1GB hard drive

Freespace 2

In space, no one can hear you curse the difficulty level

ACCELE-RATED

Volition has managed to please 3D accelerator owners yet again. Lighting effects are very well done, the explosions are the best in the business, and the nebulae are fantastic.



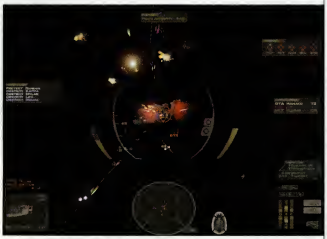
Another capital ship bites the dust.

Limping home through a brightly-colored nebula.

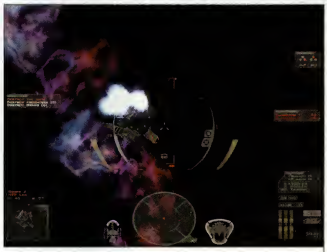
Sometimes you just want to blow shit up. As in the excellent first game, *Freespace 2* blends large scoops of action with a small helping of sim. Yes, there are a lot of keyboard controls, but the sheer "Wahoo!" factor more than makes up for it. There's so much happening in an average mission that the experience is much closer to Star Wars than Wing Commander. And on the "Kaboom Scale," it's way off the charts.

Freespace 2 takes place 30 years after the end of the last game, where the adventure concluded with the destruction of an awesome Shivan warship, the Lucifer. This ship destroyed the jump gate back to Earth, stranding a whole mess of humans and Vasudans on the far side of the galaxy, where they've formed a tentative alliance. And the Shivans are also knocking on your door, wanting to come in and play.

If anything, *Freespace 2* is even faster than the first, with a speed bordering on ridiculous. While I thought I was Chuck Yeager in the first game, my performance here was more like Jagermeister — foul and headachy. The enemies are much smarter and faster, juking like maniacs and using their afterburners to avoid your streams of fire. The huge, pokey capital ships are now armed with massive beam cannons, flak guns, and laser turrets. Your wingmen (when you have them) are a capable, disposable group, sorta like red shirts in Star Trek. I didn't try to make friends with my fellow pilots and so felt very little remorse for ordering them to fly to their deaths.



The NTC Mylae, shortly before its sudden retirement.



Ouch, that's gotta hurt. Scratch one NTF fighter.

Some of your objectives are a bit unclear from the briefings, however, especially because the situations have a tendency to dissolve once you arrive on scene. Some, which should be a cakewalk ("Go out and test these new stealth fighters"), go to hell after a few minutes ("Ack, incoming Shivans! Save us!"). As a blessing, Volition has included a "Freespace For Dummies" feature — fail a mission five times in a row and you're given the option to continue. I was more than happy to simply get on with things.

Online play has been improved in this outing as well. Cooperative missions are the most popular on Volition's servers. In one excellent campaign with three other players, we teamed up on a giant Shivan destroyer and blew it up real good. Surprisingly, the pings I was getting on my weak-ass dialup connection weren't half-bad and it was quite playable on a 56K modem.

Regardless of my dubious abilities, *Freespace 2* is fast, fun, and beautiful. As a big fan of the first game, all the aspects that I loved have been enhanced, making *Freespace 2* an attractive, breakneck package, and well worth the 1.2 gigs of hard drive space the full install gobbles up.

— **CHRIS KRAMER** *still thinks that* **Voodoo Magazine** *was a gaad idea, dammit*

GRAPHICS

Freespace 2 is brain-warpingly gorgeous and highly detailed, a neon blaze of sci-fi energy.

SOUND

3D sound is fully realized, but could have used more bass for explosions.

DEPTH

Long! This is not a "beat in two nights" waste. Online play is boss.

DESIGN

Logical storylines compete with hella tough mission structures.

RATING 8

Pluses

- --> Action, action, action
- --> Lots of missions
- --> Striking 3D graphics

Minuses

- --> Having to fuss with shields
- --> Almost too much to keep up with
- --> Taking out bombs is frustrating

DRAKAN
Order of the Flame

This is DRAKAN Order of the Flame." A fantasy world replete with ever-present danger and the dark remnants of an ancient war. Bonded by an age-old alliance are Rynn, a quick-witted skillful warrior and Arokh, her powerful draconian steed. Together they embark on a treacherous journey to defeat a dark plot to destroy the world of Drakan.

Experience the thrill of flying through vast, breathtaking 3D worlds. Master 50 different hand-to-hand combat weapons, employ up to five magical items and rule the skies with five different dragon attacks. Multiplayer support for up to eight players lets you reign supreme over Internet or LAN.

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GameSpy.com

"Imaginative, absorbing and highly recommended"
Next Generation Online

"I almost fell out of my chair when I first experienced dragon flight."
Adrenaline Vault

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 39

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THE REVIEWS ARE IN... AND DRAKAN IS A HIT!

"This game is a blast to play, and you'll want to keep on playing it, night after night, for hours."
GameCenter.com

"Best Action Game"
Games Magazine's
2000 Buyer's Guide to Games

"Easily one of the very best games of the year"
Computer Games Online

"Drakan is a Genre-Crossing Blockbuster"
Computer Gaming World

93%
GameSpy.com

www.drakan-game.com

FREE Internet play
PC CD ROM
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MATURE
Surreal software
PSYGNOSIS

DEVELOPER →	Hot House Creations
PUBLISHER →	Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED →	P200, 32MB RAM, 250MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 2MB video card
IDEAL →	PII 300, 64MB RAM, 24X CD-ROM, 600MB hard drive

Cutthroats: Terror on the High Seas

A swashbuckling shame of a game

ACCELE-RATED

Are you kidding? Not only does *Cutthroots: Terror on the High Seas* not have 3D support but the graphics are limited to 8-bit (256) color depth. Yuck!

Graphics circa 1992.

Ahoy there, matey! Rest yer eye patch and wooden leg and lemme tell ye of a story 'bout an ugly, buggy, and poorly designed game that answers to the name o' *Cutthroots*. What makes this tale a real tragedy is that it's another entry in the increasingly bloody saga of great game ideas gone horribly wrong.

This open-ended RTS from Hothouse Creations (the same folks who developed *Gangsters: Organized Crime*) pits you in the 17th century Caribbean as either a pillaging pirate or a hired privateer for the government. You begin with a modest ship, a small crew, and a few cannons. You then set out across endless oceans to battle other ships or raid dozens of ports. To ensure a lengthy career in piracy, you must amass additional crew members (by taking over ships or recruiting them at ports), increasing the fleet (frigates, brigs, galleons, etc.), and stocking up on weapons, ammo, and goods to sell at other ports. It's also necessary to trade stolen treasures in exchange for the important chattels of a seaman's existence such as rum and tobacco — the staples of any good pirate diet.

Unfortunately, while the economic management is somewhat interesting, the top-down combat sequences are poorly designed, resulting in boring and unbalanced battles, especially on water. Control during battles is virtually impossible. Furthermore, ships get "stuck together," and depending on the ships in the enemy fleet, winning a battle can be a curiously daunting task even if you've beefed up your crew and weapons.

Those red and black blobs running into each other are cannons.

Also, if you're in command of larger ships, retreating may not be an option as they'll be too slow to out-sail an enemy fleet. Indeed there are a number of options (fire weapons at enemy ships, board them to fight sword-to-sword, or ram them, etc.) but the gameplay is bland and the AI is limited, as computer-controlled fleets lack any sort of tactical organization. Looting on land from an isometric point of view proved more gratifying, but in many cases, the game froze or crashed in the middle of the few interesting bits. (It should be noted a patch was released a few days after *Cutthroots* and shipped to retailers to repair some of these play-balancing and crashing issues. Keep your fingers crossed.)

Other beefs include the terribly outdated graphics. It seems that no effort was made to make this game pretty in the least. And because of the poor AI, you'll probably want to play against human opponents, but tragically there is no multiplayer mode.

This game's open-ended gameplay, multiple outcomes for various actions, and many varied time periods (selected at the beginning of the game) make *Cutthroots* an ambitious title. But once you get a taste of butt-ugly visuals, design flaws, and overall lack of polish, you'll want to raid and pillage your local software store just for selling it to you.

— **MARC SALTZMAN** *would rother toke o long walk off o short plank than play this game*

There are over six million square miles of water in the game.

GRAPHICS

Arguably one of the worst looking games of the year, with pixelated 2D sprites. Woo hoo!

SOUND

Good music, but the sound effects and voice snippets are annoying.

DEPTH

A lot of depth and open-ended scenarios for extra replayability — if you get past design flaws, poor AI, etc.

DESIGN

Ambitious. But ample resource management can't save this ship.

RATING 3

Pluses

- Large, epic scope
- Some micro-management is entertaining
- Can be used as a coaster for your favorite beer

Minuses

- Bugs, crashes
- Weak AI
- Uninspiring combat

In 1997, there was over $11 billion in revenue lost due to software piracy PC ACCELERATOR December 1999 http://www.pcxl.com

DEVELOPER →	Illusion Softworks
PUBLISHER →	Take 2 Interactive
REQUIRED →	P233, 32MB RAM, 450MB hard drive, D3D graphics card
IDEAL →	PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 32MB TNT2 or G400 card

Hidden and Dangerous

"The pope? How many divisions has he got?" — Stalin

ACCELE-RATED

Requirement for 3D acceleration is overkill, but the detailed textured give a real human look to all the Nazis you bust a cap into. Direct 3D support means Voodoo3, TNT2, and Matrox G200 all work fine.

IN THE BUTT BOB

We can't think of any single place more dangerous to hide anything than in your ass. But throughout time it has been the body cavity of choic...

RICHARD GERE
UP HIS ASS → A G...rbal
WHY IN THE HELL? → Poogie say for the pleasure – PCXL says no thanks

JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA
UP HIS ASS → Own head
WHY IN THE HELL? → Apparently no one told him to shut the hell up

HORRIBLY UNLUCKY SOLDIER
UP HIS ASS → A live ammunition shell
WHY IN THE HELL? → Apparently it is one of the unmentioned and especially horrific dangers of war (see X-Ray below for proof)

The year is 1943, and I'm crawling through knee-deep mud. Over a small hill I can barely make out the form of my very first victim. His gray helmet drips water from the torrential rain down his uniform. I signal my squad to halt, and they crouch down, covering my ass. I raise my sniper rifle, stare down the scope, and take aim at this casualty of war's temple. One breath, then ... BANG! The Nazi drops. But before the celebrations begin, one of my squadmates catches sight of a Nazi running out of the little guardhouse. He tries to take him out by firing directly through my back. I'm the one in a heap now. This is just the beginning of the multitude of problems that plague what could have been one of the best action/strategy games ever made.

In *Hidden and Dangerous*, you take command of four SAS commandos in first- and third-person views through six campaigns comprising 23 missions in total (the last two campaigns have a total of three missions, which is a slight disappointment). Deep behind enemy lines in Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Norway, The North Atlantic, and Czechoslovakia, you pick your squad from 35 soldiers of varying rank and stats for different shooting and reaction abilities.

A variety of vehicles to control and a real mix of genres points to the future of games – but work needs to be done.

Half-tracks full of Nazis you get to kill – now that is gaming!

But, we heard a wise man once say, choose wisely, for the men you take into the campaign must last you through the whole thing. A nifty "save anywhere" function lets you restart the game whenever a guy gets pegged in any of the tough situations.

Objectives are introduced with excellent briefings and range from the demolition of a sub base, to capturing high ranking Nazi officers, to hostage rescue in superbly designed levels. One involved taking a cool black '40s limo with Nazi flags on the bumpers to find civilian clothes, then sneaking through a kraut infested town to steal a boat harbored in the bay.

Great music and stunning 3D graphics and effects give the game epic form and a dynamic pace that really lets you pour your heart into every battle. Also, driving a jeep with a mounted machine gun, a motorcycle with a sidecar, and a tank (among others) was fun, but occasionally frustrating, as the smallest collision would cause the thing to break down.

After all this high praise, here comes the tragic "but ..."

Weak AI makes your soldiers shoot you in the back. They won't avoid land mines, or turn around when a battle is raging behind them, and the Nazi army never comprised so many amazing marksmen. And, there are a number of collision and clipping issues in the graphics engine (and a big performance hit when the bullets start flying). And, unfortunately, multiplayer support for four players over a LAN seems tacked on and needs more functionality.

But despite its shortcomings *H&D*'s inventive gameplay and level design made me want to stick with it to the end — though I was cursing all the way. It's another game in the growing list of enticing, yet flawed "first" games that has a potential hopefully realized in the sequel.

***—JEF SHOULTS** will be stoked to see his nome in print (the geek)*

GRAPHICS
Great textures and atmospheric look. Really quite impressive.

SOUND
Good sound effects, but it needs some better gunfire sounds. Music is downright incredible.

DEPTH
Rich storyline and inventive objectives keep the experience fresh with each mission.

DESIGN
Well intentioned all the way, but, alas, the AI needs to be more worldly-wise to make the varied gameplay work adequately.

RATING 6

Pluses
- → Great story
- → Any chance to snipe Nazis is cool
- → Good fog and rain effects

Minuses
- → AI enemies are hella tough
- → Graphic bugs
- → Needs more overall polish

http://www.illusion.cz
Illusion Softworks is headquartered in the Czech Republic

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the Green Berets.

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SPEC OPS II:
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> LAN or Internet multiplay for up to 16 players.

> Higher polygon models for extreme realism.

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> An even greater selection of actual weapons.

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DEVELOPER →	Enlight Software
PUBLISHER →	Ubi Soft
REQUIRED →	P166, 32MB RAM, 160MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	PII 300, 64MB RAM, 24X CD-ROM, 600MB hard drive

Seven Kingdoms 2

Or should that be 14 Kingdoms? Or 49?

ACCELE-RATED

The 3D requirements are pretty minimal. The recommendation is only a 4MB DirectX compatible card — although it looks real purty on a Voodoo3 3000.

If there weren't another medieval realtime strategy game with "king" in its title (hint: It isn't *Total Annihilations: Kingdoms 2*) jousting its way to the head of the round table as we speak, *Seven Kingdoms 2* might have a shot at being the next big RTS. As it is, Microsoft's *Age of Kings* will be chiding *SK2* with taunts like ... "That's right, who's your majesty? Who's your majesty?" ... all the way to the market.

We're not saying *SK2* is a poor game, just poorly timed, partially due to delays in getting passed from Interactive Magic to Ubi Soft when the titles were transferred. It certainly improves over *Seven Kingdoms* (designer Trevor Chan's empire-building, diplomatic romp) without losing its feudal flavor, and its qualities against the majority of RTS games will give it legs. As in the original, you won't get by with building up units and tank-rushing the enemy. It takes serious political finesse — with more than interns — to be a successful power-monger. Working the economic, foreign policy, and technology angles holds just as much sway as building an armada of grunts. This holds especially true for multiplayer where up to eight players clamor for rule in a game that often feels more like chess than realtime *Civilization*.

This little sucker kicks ass.

A Fryhton lair close to home.

Even if it's raining, ya gotta keep the kingdoms fed.

Choose one: A) "Big Mouth hungry!" or B) "Hulk no understand."

In the single-player campaign, you assume the leadership role of one of 12 different nationalities (not many RTS games assign you to the exciting life of a squire) and must forge a mountainous empire out of a few molehill villages. As with the first *Seven Kingdoms*, each group has its own benefits and detriments according to their culture. The races are well-balanced, with each having their own special units, items, and abilities (such as invoking greater beings for divine intervention) that set them apart, but don't create a clear-cut dominant.

Another new feature is the addition of heroes to each civilization, such as Greece's Achilles and the Mongol's Ghengis ("Wrath of") Khan. A wandering bad-ass might join your forces, or you can hire his services at an inn. Complete with their own unique items and abilities, heroes can appropriately make the difference in the success of your empire. It's great fun.

The Fryhtans reprise their role as the bad dudes, 'natch. For those less interested in micro-management and more excited about the prospects of serious slayage, *SK2* lets you control any of the 15 types of Fryhtans. Rather than building an economy, the Fryht-knights are all about enslaving towns — and forcing them to pay the bills — or simply eating their human livestock.

Graphically, *SK2*'s rendered units have more detail, such as visible weapons and armor, but the audio seems odd. Perhaps it is the light and fluffy score providing ambiance during our Fryhtan campaign of maim and mutilation, but it felt a bit off the mark. Other than this minor soundtrack quibble, there's much to like in these *Seven Kingdoms*, too, er, 2. Watch for this game to be another critically acclaimed, but publicly lamed RTS extravaganza.

— JOEL STRAUCH *feels* **SK2** *is probably going to get a bum rap*

GRAPHICS

Nice 16-bit color graphics with up to 1024x768 resolution. Creatures look quite nice.

SOUND

Soundtrack doesn't always mesh with what's going on in the game.

DEPTH

Waaaay deep. From economics to espionage to diplomacy, this ain't your dad's RTS game.

DESIGN

Tough to get started unless you're grounded in the original *SK*.

RATING 8

Pluses

- → Get to play as Fryhtan
- → Useful tutorials
- → Deep multiplayer

Minuses

- → Long learning curve possible
- → Iffy musical score
- → Arriving at the same time as *Age of Kings*. Ouch.

DEVELOPER -->	Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER -->	Microsoft
REQUIRED -->	P166, 32MB RAM, 2MB video card, 200MB hard drive, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL -->	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 16x CD-ROM, 335MB hard drive

Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings

"It's Good to be the King!" – Mel Brooks, *History of the World: Part I*

ACCELE-RATED

Nada. *AoK* doesn't support 3D acceleration, but it's a damn good-looking 2D game, if that's any consolation. Perhaps a new engine for *Age of Empires III*?

Larger animated buildings add scale to the worlds in *Age of Kings*.

Most computer game journalists will agree writing an actual game review is the easy part — it's playing the hell out of the game that soaks up the majority of your time. With that in mind, once in a *very* blue moon you get assigned to review a game that's so freakin' good, you can't turn it off long enough to launch your word processor. *Age of Empires II: Age of Kings* (*AoK*) is such a game. As my dry, bloodshot eyes will attest, this sequel not only surpasses its award-winning predecessor, but I'll be so bold to say it's one of (if not) the greatest realtime strategy (RTS) games in the history of the genre. Here's why ...

Microsoft and Ensemble Studios retained what made the original *Age of Empires* (*AoE*) such a big seller, while adding a host of new features and much-needed improvements. Chronologically, *AoK* takes place where *AoE* left off, beginning with the fall of Rome and spanning roughly a thousand years to the late Middle Ages. Each of the 13 new civilizations — including the Persians, Japanese, Mogols, Franks, and Byzantines, to name a few — feature their own architectural styles, technology trees, and a few unique units per culture. And even more than with its predecessor, the ol' rock/paper/scissors design makes for a well-balanced game between the civilizations. For instance, the Teutons are more resistant to conversion, the monks heal two times as fast, the Celts have faster lumberjacks and infantry, while the Saracens create better galleys and faster transport ships.

Detail in units and buildings is extraordinary in *AOE II*.

New tweaks, including the ability to queue unit production (as with the *Rise of Rome* expansion pack) make micromanaging units and resources much easier. You can align troops in formations for more organized battle or travel, with the option to buy, sell, or trade goods with allies. Other extras include the ability to see unit shadows behind buildings and order units inside buildings for added protection (garrisoning).

And lastly, *AoK* now features optional military commands such as "guard," "follow," or "patrol," and my personal favorite — a "find idle villagers" hot key to find idle units lazing around on the map so you can put them to work! This is especially useful after they've depleted a resource and need a new command. Has Ensemble Studios thought of everything? Quite possibly.

Many beefs with *AoE* have been addressed too, ▶ p. 101

The most important rule of *AOE II*: If this is your first time at *AOE II*, you must micromanage.

In this particular scenario, the amounts of gold, food, rock, and wood are pre-set at 1000 units each.
Each of the civilizations feature unique architecture, units, weapons, and technologies
The first bar is the objectives list. It will flash if there's an update, prompting the gamer to read it. The second button here is your on-line technology tree.
Age of Kings allows the gamer to select troop formations. "Line" is where units are placed shoulder to shoulder, "box" units are in a square pattern, "staggered" means a spread line formation, "flank" divides units into two groups, while "horde" is to move units together but in no particular formation.
These nifty little icons provide statistics, the ability to search for idle villagers, and three different ways to look at the map and more.

This third button is to chat with other gamers, while the fourth is dedicated to trading with allied civilizations. The fifth button is for options, such as graphics (crank it up to 1280x1024), gameplay modes or the ability to record your own games.
Over a dozen different kinds of ships can be built in Age of Kings. Scan here are some fire ships, demolition ships, and galleys fighting against the enemies.
These icons on the lower level are for the units' optional combat stance — aggressive, defensive, or stand ground/no attack.
Fire Ship
Persians
Marc

Much like *Age of Empires I*, gamers must collect the essential four resources: Food, wood, gold, and stone – we're assuming that "beer" goes under the "food" category.

▶ p. 99 namely in the AI department. For one, unit pathfinding is much improved. Now, when you drag and drop your villagers or military units, they actually take the most logical route there. And secondly, troops will likely join a nearby fight instead of just idly standing there. Oddly enough, demolition and fire ships seem to be the only ones that still seem sorta dumb. The only other minor bugs include wolves that say "kill for food" when you place the mouse over them, even though wolves are not edible, and a few times the "create a scenario" game wouldn't let me exit if I chose the "don't save" button.

The single and multiplayer game modes in *AoK* are varied and highly enjoyable. Along with a map generator for random conditions (or to choose your own), there's a very usable map editor allowing gamers to create and exchange scenarios (or link them together into campaigns). Other new gameplay types include "Regicide" (protect thy King), "Deathmatch" for a survival of the fittest, and story-based campaigns such as Joan of Arc, Barbarossa, and Saladin.

In the "Genghis Khan" scenario, your first goal is to ride to various Mongol tribes and convince them to join Khan's army. However, the Ungirrads ask for a holy relic to be recovered and returned to their monastery, while the Kereyids' monks are hungry and will only help you if 20 sheep are brought to the tribe. The gamer is also forced to make a moral decision, as the Naiman and Tayichi'uds are rival tribes and will only join Khan's army if the other is wiped out. Hmmm ...

The feared Persian elephant rush is actually quite effective, if comical.

Multiplayer *AoK* is free over the MSN Gaming Zone (www.zone.com) or via LAN, TCP/IP, modem-to-modem, or serial hook-up. Over the Zone, the games were relatively lag-free, even with six out of eight players (maximum) playing three sets of two teams in "Deathmatch" mode.

While *Star/Warcraft*, *Myth* and *C & C* series are some of the finest RTS around, *AoK* is the undisputed champ for its incredible depth, intuitive control, and sheer enjoyment. Long live the king!

— **MARC SALTZMAN** *has a technology tree in his backyard*

GRAPHICS

Highly detailed units and buildings make this 2D strategy game a real looker. You can't zoom in or out or rotate the map but you don't need to.

SOUND

Music and sound effects are fairly good, as are the unit responses, but the voiceover acting in the campaigns is pretty foul.

DEPTH

With its variety of gameplay modes, in-depth technology trees, unique civilizations, *AoK* is a deep game, but still relatively easy for newbies.

DESIGN

A highly-entertaining and challenging historical sim with boatloads of replayability.

RATING 9

Pluses

- Incredible depth and polish
- Well-balanced civilizations with unique units, buildings, etc
- Great graphics and lots of atmospheric touches

Minuses

- Cheesy, over-the-top voiceover acting for the campaign modes
- Can't assign formations to any naval units
- Some slight AI issues on water

This is all the action
RATING PENDING
RP
ESRB

Fast-paced, dynamic world
True line of sight system
100's of spell combinations
Summon and control creatures
Create your own traps, ambush victims
Defeat Hecubah, Queen of the Undead

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Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 46

DEVELOPER ⇢	Crystal Dynamics
PUBLISHER ⇢	Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED ⇢	P133, 32MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 300MB hard drive
IDEAL ⇢	PII 266, 6X CD-ROM drive, 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

Going through Hell and high water ...

ACCELE-RATED

Low system specs mean that any decent 3D card (Voodoo2 or better) will give smooth framerates. Most of the effects are simple, but colorful enough to have flair.

Raziel raises a baddy up the flagpole and salutes.

BLOODSUCKERS

As a service to our readers, PCXL rates other vampires based on the danger they pose to the public

VAMPIRE ⇢ "Angel"
DANGER RATING ⇢ 4 (out of 10)
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 7
Hey, give him props. He did score with Sarah Michelle Gellar

VAMPIRE ⇢ "Count Chocula"
DANGER RATING ⇢ 6 (mostly clogged arteries)
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 8
Is there a cooler cereal than one that'll turn your milk brown?

VAMPIRE ⇢ Anna-Nicole Smith
DANGER RATING ⇢ 2
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 4
Only dangerous if you're an 80-year-old millionaire on life support

VAMPIRE ⇢ Todd Porter
DANGER RATING ⇢ 10
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 0
The man can suck your bank account dry so fast, he can't be human

VAMPIRE ⇢ Bela Lugosi's Dracula
DANGER RATING ⇢ 10
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 10
No Dracula that followed was even worthy of touching his cape

VAMPIRE ⇢ Gary Oldman's Dracula
DANGER RATING ⇢ 6
COOLNESS RATING ⇢ 5
Nice John Lennon glasses, but what's up with the fem hairstyle?

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain was a minor PlayStation hit that managed to attract a devoted cult following who eagerly awaited the long-delayed sequel. Even if (like me) you're a PC gamer who tends to look down your nose at console games and worse still, console ports, this vampire's return doesn't suck.

Soul Reaver picks up about 1000 years after the first one left off. Kain, your master, is the leader of a vampiric empire that has driven most of the humans of Nosgoth into hiding. You play Raziel, Kain's chief lieutenant. Being the consummate over-achiever, you've had the audacity to develop a new power — wings — before your master. Time to pay for your effrontery by being tossed into the Lake of the Dead. When you wake, you've been radically altered, (you no longer suck blood, you consume souls) and you are determined to avenge yourself on your former master.

This sequel is a 3D action adventure similar to Acclaim's *Shadow Man*. You control Raziel in the third-person as you travel around Nosgoth killing vampire brothers in a quest to destroy Kain. The game's effective controls are fairly simple to understand, although during heated battles, the camera occasionally doesn't swing around fast enough to catch the best angle. During combat, opposing vampires will eventually heal physical damage unless they are impaled or Raziel throws them into either fire, water, or sunlight, then sucks out their souls. This makes for some very intense combat situations as pairs of vampires work together to distract you while their companion heals.

Shifting back and forth between the "Material Plane" and the "Spiritual Plane," you pass into areas unreachable from the other plane. While this plane-shifting aspect conjures up some fresh conundrums, too many of the game's other puzzles are of the "hit the switch/listen for the gate" variety. And there are so damn many shifting block puzzles that after a while I felt like "Raziel the Undead Civil Engineer." In addition, problems with the camera and control can make lining up your jumps a very frustrating experience, particularly when precise jumping is vital.

Lucky little undead bastard still gets the babes, even if he has to jump to reach their breastesses ...

However, *Soul Reaver* has one of the most interesting and mature storylines I've ever seen. Unfortunately, after all the build-up, the concluding scene raises more questions than it answers. But the voice acting and sound effects are second to none. If you're a fan of the *Tomb Raider*-style cavern-crawl, pick this one up.

— **ALLEN RAUSCH's** *nickname is the "Undead Game Reviewer"*

GRAPHICS

Beautiful if a bit monochromatic. Character animation is simply breathtaking.

SOUND

Stellar, some of the finest voice acting ever in a video game.

DEPTH

Enjoyable, intricate environment based puzzles — if you liked *TR*.

DESIGN

Minor problems with control and camera; puzzles don't all need to be solved to complete game.

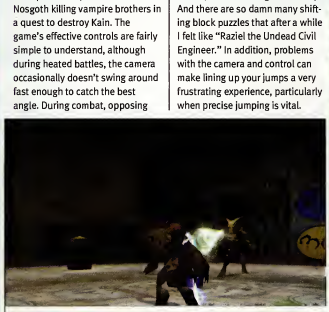
RATING 7

Pluses

- ⇢ Well written, adult plotline
- ⇢ Amazing voice and sound effects
- ⇢ Beautiful graphics and animation

Minuses

- ⇢ Some problems lining up jumps
- ⇢ Cheesy ending
- ⇢ Too many "move block" puzzles



Warning vamp-boy, you mess with the bull, you get the horns.

Raziel and his brothers are named after several fallen angels mentioned in the Bible
PC ACCELERATOR December 1999 http://www.pcxl.com

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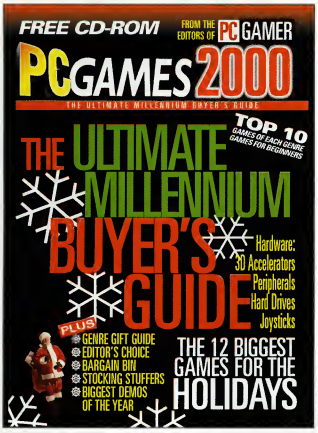

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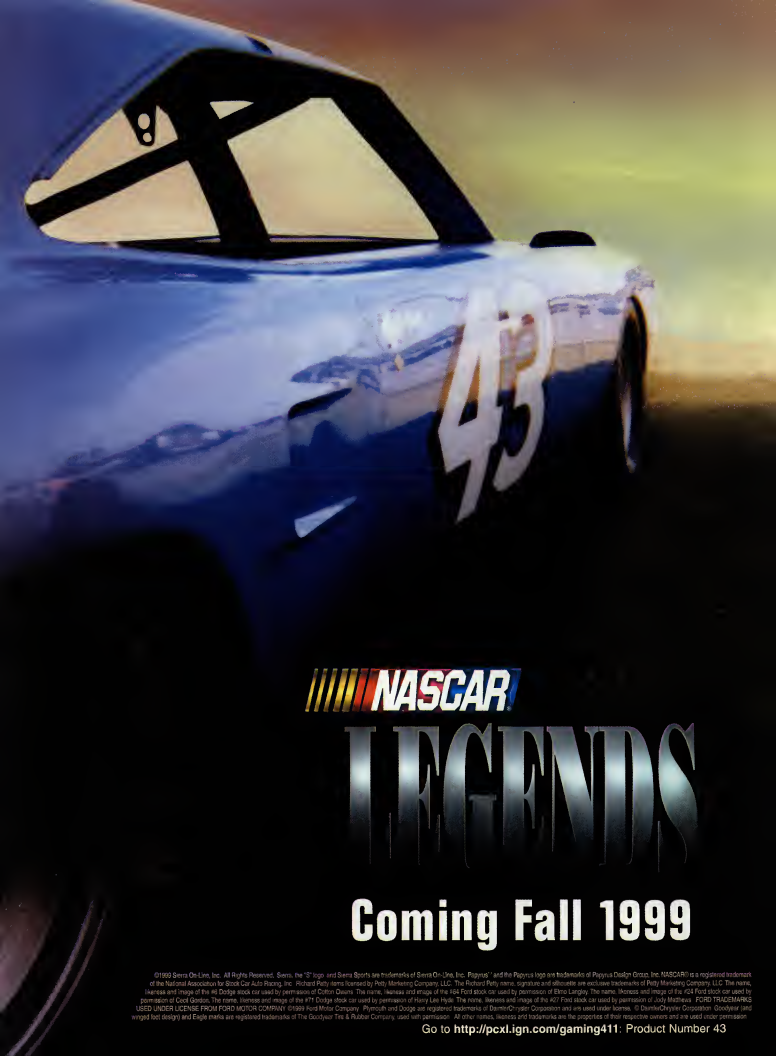
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Game celebs in the sports world

With Nintendo chief Howard Lincoln now the acting chairman of the Seattle Mariners, PCXL figures the gaming world is flush with important people who can make the sports business just as confused, twisted, and befuddled as the games industry. Read on, and find out who the prime candidates are to turn your favorite team into the sporting *Daikatana* of tomorrow ...

HOWARD LINCOLN

GAME JOB → Chairman, Nintendo of America
SPORTS TITLE → Chairman, Seattle Mariners
FIRST ACT → (This is true) Boosts Mariners payroll to $65-70 million, offers giant, long-term contracts to Ken Griffey Jr. and Alex Rodriquez
LAST ACT → Signs Mario to $15 million per year contract to pitch as the team's closer, dictatorially chooses Pikachu as new Mariners' mascot, causing wide-spread semi-epileptic seizures throughout Seattle

SID MEIER

GAME JOB → Chairman and Founder, Firaxis Games; Creator of the *Civilization* series
SPORTS TITLE → Commissioner, Major League Soccer
FIRST ACT → Enacts sweeping plan to actually make soccer popular, sending settler and musketeer units into each and every American home, forcing them to watch the Fusion vs. Crew game at gunpoint
LAST ACT → Accidentally pushes nuke button on commissioners' office tool bar, wiping out all North American towns starting with the letter "B"

DAVE PERRY

GAME JOB → Head of Shiny Entertainment, developer of *Messiah*
SPORTS TITLE → General Manager, Los Angeles Lakers
FIRST ACT → Signs Michael Jordan, Tim Duncan, and Stephon Marbury to contracts with the Lakers, proclaims the team as "potentially the greatest in history"
LAST ACT → Following the example set at Shiny, Perry assembles a huge group of talent that seems to languish for years without accomplishing anything. The Lakers reach the first round of the playoffs in 2001, only to forfeit the series to the Vancouver Grizzlies when Shaq declares he won't play because he's "tired"

"WILD" BILL STEALEY

FORMER GAME JOB → CEO, Interactive Magic
SPORTS TITLE → Chairman, Cincinnati Bengals
FIRST ACT → Declares that the Bengals will now only play A+ football. Changes mind, declares that Bengals will be an "online only" team. Changes mind, decides to spend the organization's entire payroll on marketing Warbirds action figures
LAST ACT → Replaces entire Bengals offense with bearded WWII flight sim programmers, resulting in more wins than the team had in 1998, but seriously frightening the real league powers-that-be — ESPN anchormen

MIKE SALMON

GAME JOB → Editor-in-Chief, PCXL
SPORTS TITLE → Dennis Rodman wanna-be
FIRST ACT → Dies hair in rainbow colors, attempts to play as wacky, in-your-face forward for Chicago Bulls
LAST ACT → Has left arm ripped off by Karl Malone after Salmon calls him a Mormon-lovin' truck daddy. Ends up acting in movies with titles like *Triple Exposure* and hitting on washed-up "Baywatch" extras

THRESH

GAME JOB → *Quake* champion
SPORTS TITLE → Weasel-y TV reporter on the sidelines during games
FIRST ACT → Trying to catch a hungry Rick Majerus for a really stupid 20-second interview just before halftime at a Utah-Kentucky college basketball game
LAST ACT → Trying to catch a hungry Rick Majerus at the Utah-Kentucky game, only to be swallowed whole by his would-be interviewee

JOHN ROMERO

GAME JOB → Co-Founder and Whipping Boy, Ion Storm
SPORTS TITLE → The new Demetrius Underwood, insane Minnesota Vikings draft pick
FIRST ACT → Declares he's giving up *Daikatana* development because God told him to
LAST ACT → Arrested when found wandering the streets babbling, "*Dominion 2* will make all cops my bitches"

THE STANDINGS

These standings are very important to us — otherwise we wouldn't do them. But here's a question: Would any of you brain-dead sports game fans notice if these standings were completely reversed and *Links Extreme* topped the table? Send your thoughts to letters@pcxl.com.

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	4	0
	NBA Live 98	3	1
	NBA Inside Drive 2000	1	3
	NBA Action	0	4
FOOTBALL	Madden 2000	1	0
	NFL Fever 2000	0	1
GOLF	Links LS 99	7	0
	Jack Nicklaus 6	6	1
	PGA Championship 99	5	2
	Tiger Woods 99	4	3
	Golden Tee Golf	3	4
	Pro 18 World Tour	2	5
	Links Extreme	0	7
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 2K	4	0
	Triple Play 2K	3	1
	Microsoft Baseball 2K	2	2
	Hardball 6: 2K Edition	1	3
	Baseball 2K Edition (VR)	0	4
HOCKEY	NHL 2000	3	0
	FIFA 99	2	1
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	0

DEVELOPER → Radical Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Fox Sports Interactive
RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

A basketball game with graphics, stats, and "attitude" gleaned directly from Fox network broadcasts.

THE HURDLE

Three words — *NBA Live 2000*. Hoops fans know, love, and are comfortable with this franchise to the point of exclusion for other titles. Getting past prejudice will be tough.

THE HIT

The game moves fast enough, but unless the graphics are souped up, both *NBA Live 2000* and *NBA Inside Drive 2000* likely offer better visuals.

NBA Championship 2000

Or how to quit worrying and love sequels

Pity poor Fox Sports Interactive. Jumping into the PC basketball pool these days is like swimming with virtual sharks — the EA Sports' great white *NBA Live* circling underneath, the behemoth Microsoft and its *NBA Inside Drive 2000* swimming overhead. Will Fox's new *NBA Championship 2000* do some biting of its own?

The visually impressive title isn't without its own chompers, looking and playing at a level that belies once-troubled rookie developer Radical Entertainment's dearth of experience. Infused with the sights, sounds and attitude of Fox Sports broadcasts (and with cross-promotional TV opportunities out the wazoo), *NBA Championship* does manage to swim to its own tune, but it may wade in the shallow end for the most hardened PC hoopsters.

And that may be Fox's plan: Establish themselves in the market with a solid title that it can slowly build until it's time to challenge EA and Microsoft full tilt (in a manner similar to Microsoft's own football rookie, *NFL Fever*). If that's the idea, Radical has certainly crafted a solid, good-looking launch pad. Our preview build of the game moves with the fluidity of *NBA Live*, perhaps even slightly faster. Of course, the game's speed may be assisted by graphics that are good, but still slightly below those we've seen in early looks at *NBA Live 2000*.

Karl Malone watches idly as the future of the NBA passes him by.

Pacers play their patented "stand around" defense.

Look on in horror at the faces of Patrick Ewing and Reggie Miller.

Since showing the game as an average-looking ESPN-branded title at the 1998 E3, Radical went back to the drawing board and built a whole new engine, with real player faces, 3D arenas, and hundreds of new motion-capture moves. What players will notice first, though, are the score, replay, and statistics graphics lifted straight from Fox broadcasts. One of the most impressive of these is the replay segment called Fox Scope, which shows a cross-hair, zeroing in on the player, then zooming out for a wider view of the action. It's a nice touch that makes your monitor suddenly seem like the living room TV. It's an illusion that's carried throughout, even down to the Fox ticker that flashes in-progress game updates across the bottom of your screen.

Sound in the game is fine, too, as are the announcers. Fox employs Greg Papa on play-by-play and Doc Rivers as color man. Voice samples from both are usually germaine to the action and pitched as you'd expect for Fox.

Where Fox has decided to scrimp this time around is in the game's depth. While EA's title will feature a franchise mode, *NBA Championship* will stick with the old-school season simulation. All the requisite stuff will still be featured: Full and partial season mode, create-a-player, season statistics tracking, and more than 340 real NBA players. But most PC players are looking for slightly more meat on their graphic bones.

NBA Championship 2000 looks to be a worthy competitor when it swims into the competitive ocean of PC basketball. With fast framerates and solid graphics, Radical Entertainment seems to have set itself up for a fight against the big boys. We just may have to wait until next year's version to see if the game has the jaws to bite into EA and Microsoft's lead. ➤

Scottie Pippen recently called Charles Barkley "fat and selfish." He forgot "violent and bald"

DEVELOPER	Visual Sciences
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis
REQUIRED	P166, 32MB RAM, 108MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 210MB hard drive, 3D accelertator card, EAX sound card

Expert Pool

Alison, my aim is true ... uh, Alison? Yo, Alison? Anybody?

ACCELE-RATED

Without a 3D card, the software graphics make the balls awful. With one (a Voodoo1 or TNT1 will do fine), the tables and static environments look excellent.

Where's Alison?

Don't look down her shirt.

Psygnosis gave PC-using fans of the great green felt game plenty to be excited about with some enticing promises. Living, populated pool halls, high-profile ESPN promotion, realistic physics, and the Psygnosis reputation for graphical flair, plus the endorsement of pool superstar Alison Fisher — it's an impressive set-up. Well here we are at release, and three out of five ain't bad. The populated pool halls are just big, pretty, lonely environments populated by Joe Background and Jane Schmuck-Mannequin, and Ms. Fisher is nowhere in sight.

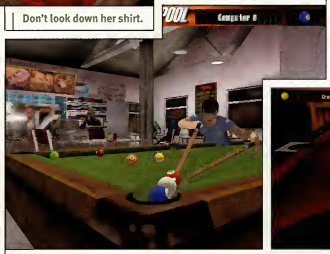
As for the actual pool gameplay? On the whole, it's excellent. I mean, how can you screw up a sim when the gameplay on which it's based is solid? *Expert Pool* offers 19 types of pool games, including 8-Ball, 9-Ball, Cut-throat, straight pool, and Rotation, not to mention those odd birds known as French billiards and British (or "wrong") pool. The physics are top of the line, holding up against such esoteric tests as the "gear follow," wherein you put a reverse spin on the cue ball, which then transmits forward spin to the target ball.

Problem is, we already had an excellent pool sim on the market — *Virtual Pool 2*. Now, it must be understood that *Expert Pool* walks all over *VP2*, or anything else, in terms of graphic presentation. The detailed, personality-rich environs of *Expert Pool* (ranging from grand tournament halls to nasty biker bars) make *VP2*'s tiny range of no-frills habitats look completely and utterly lame in comparison. But what of it? While *Expert Pool* offers tutorial sections devoted to basic skills, trick shots, and theory, the sessions are eerily devoid of hand-holding and seem to forsake the poor newbie.

"I say we beat him — then we kill him!" (*I say we let him go!*)

In fact, almost every point at which *Expert Pool* aims to top the competition seems hobbled. The environments are bigger and prettier — but so what? You can't explore 'em or monitor 'em. Pool equipment maker Kasson displays its brand-name proudly on the sides of tables — big frickin' deal. The commentary AI is abysmal, alternating between cracks like "wow, that's a bad shot" after a hard-won safety and blatant, sad plugs for Kasson Tables that have nothing to do with the game. The lonely "tutorials" totally lack any actual instruction, the game's "extras" are extraordinary non-sequitors, and the environments are lifeless.

But those fluff bits said, the gameplay's good. Superb, in fact. Just don't expect any new bells or whistles. The green-felt mistress has a hotter bod and some new clothes ... but she's still as aloof and distant as ever.



To hell with this game, let's go right to the snack bar!

GRAPHICS

Expert Pool is on the top of the heap for pool sims, with great lighting, tables and environments.

SOUND

Flawless table/ball sounds, somewhat cheesoid opponent remarks, turn the in-game commentary off.

CONTROL

Good, sensitive control, allowing for viewing changes, applied english, cue elevation, etc.

REALISM

Perfect ball physics. Perspective on rail shots is strange, but otherwise this lonely game is excellent.

RATING 7

Pluses

- Responsive control, good physics
- Tutorial addresses safety play
- Detailed environments

Minuses

- Execution of tutorial is weak
- Where are the "populated" halls?
- Terrible need for high cue angle whenever the cue ball is on a rail

Mike Salmon "says" he came within one ball of beating Alison Fisher at 8-Ball

NHL 2000

Or how to quit worrying and love sequels

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
REQUIRED → P166 (with 3D card), P200 (without 3D card), 32MB RAM, 70MB hard drive
IDEAL → PII 400, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator card

ACCELE-RATED

The best-looking graphics any sports game has yet conjured, and with EA that's saying a lot. Voodoo2 scored slightly higher than TNT.

My name is Jim. I work at a prominent PC game developer called — well, I shouldn't say, but it rhymes with Box Ports Interactive. And I've got something to get off my chest.

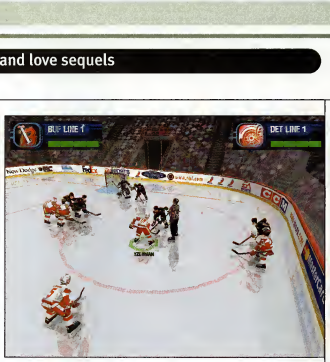
We're bringing out our own PC hockey game this year, and so far it looks pretty dang good. But EA Sports has this game that everyone just thinks is the be-all-end-all. Maybe you've heard of it — the NHL series, the one that's been around since it helped put Sega Genesis on the map. Every year it just seems to get better. This *NHL 2000* has got some of the best graphics, game animations, and TV-style presentations we've ever seen. Not to mention an added franchise mode, Internet play, and even this gizmo that lets you import your face into the game!

Why does it look so good? It's the spray of ice as your wingman comes to a quick stop, dynamic reflections that follow players around the ice, and the eerie faces and lip movements. Then there's the fluid way in which the players move and the improvements to some of NHL 99's polygon and clipping troubles. I'm not even going to mention the game intros and replay transitions. It depresses me just to think about it.

How your face starts out ...

Is that you or Phyllis Diller?

Insert your own joke about Satan playing hockey here.



The detail of the player models in *NHL 2K* is incredible.

Scoring is slightly easier this year than last, but the game's AI seems to be hit-and-miss. Breakouts and rushes are great, but opposing computer teams will often ignore wide open nets. But I hate to admit that gameplay is dead on — again. With dedicated deke and big hit buttons, plus excellent player movements, *NHL 2K* just feels right.

At least I can take solace in the fact that sound this year isn't much better than last — Jim Hughson and Bill Clement are enjoyable and on-target through your first few hours of the game, but get progressively tiresome and repetitive the longer you play. And I find momentary comfort that one of the game's most touted features falls short of expectations — the import-your-face thingy. It just doesn't seem to deliver anything but hideous monsters that look worse than Joan Rivers.

Unfortunately, I can't get too excited, because the game is as deep as it is pretty with an expanded draft option and a career mode that spans up to 10 years. While Internet play was slightly choppy out of the box, EA is promising a patch to help shore things up. Overall, though, those wieners at EA Sports continue to make my life miserable.

If you've got last year's and are content with that roster, you'll probably want to bypass this. As for me, I've got my work cut out, because EA's probably already working on *NHL 2001*. Dang. ➤

GRAPHICS

The best sports game graphics around, with realistic player faces and perfectly subtle on-ice touches.

SOUND

Terrific crowd and in-game sounds, but relatively staid commentary gets kinda old.

CONTROL

Excellent control, especially with the addition of big hit and big deke buttons. Good job, guys.

REALISM

Very good, though regulation-length games tend to give up an unrealistic number of goals.

RATING 8

Pluses

→ Graphics that will amaze
→ Excellent depth
→ Realistic in-game and crowd sounds

Minuses

→ Import-your-face feature falls short
→ Sometimes repetitive commentary
→ Spotty AI

PCXL still considers the NHL games as the best fighting games on the PC

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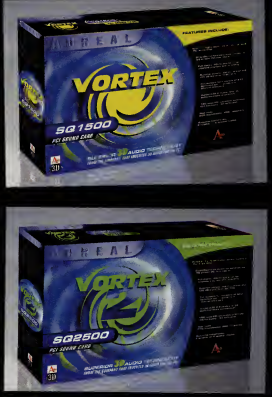

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ASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER

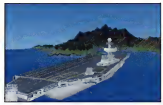
Anyone who's been addicted to *Everquest* or *Ultima Online* can tell you that massively multiplayer cooperative online gaming has a bright future. But there's more out there than just fantasy swords and sorcery games. This month we delved further into this burgeoning field, uncovering a number of different options. We apologize in advance for using the horrible marketing slogan "massively multiplayer." If you can think of any better descriptors, send 'em in.

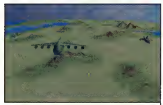
SOVEREIGN

DEVELOPER ⇢ Verant
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ...
Realtime Strategy
RELEASE DATE ⇢ Q2 2000
DISTRIBUTION METHOD ⇢
Retail, price per month TBA

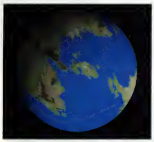
A game that pages you when you're under attack but offline? You've gotta be kidding ... Yup, what few precious hours *Sovereign* players spend away from their game, they can carry pagers in case they get jumped while they're taking a bathroom break, having dinner, or living any semblance of a normal life. Hey, it's better than pages from collection agencies and moms — we guess.

The game in question here is Verant's *Sovereign*, billed as the first massively multiplayer RTS. You acquire and defend territory in the form of cities and bases, and wage war with as few as four or as many as 500 players. The scale is such that you can zoom out to see the whole planet if you'd like, or zoom in on the minute details of a single unit. When you're logged off, the computer takes over and your defenses are made stronger. Also, much like *Alpha Centauri*, you get to pick what type of leader you want to be, whether it's a military type or a scientist. This will affect your diplomatic treaties and selection of allies. But getting paged by a game? Where will it all end?





It's not just multiplayer — it's massively so!



"Hello? This is your computer ... Drop whatever you're doing, your city is under attack! Forget that so-called 'real life' of yours."

The first rule of Geek Club: You don't talk about Geek Club.

THE RUINS OF KUNARK

DEVELOPER ⇢ Verant
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ...
RPG
RELEASE DATE ⇢ Q1 2000
DISTRIBUTION METHOD ⇢
Retail, $9.89/month

How do you keep 100,000 RPG nerds begging for more? Well, since Verant is God (at least in Norrath), they can raise a new continent out of the sea! Yeah, that's the ticket. The new island will provide dozens more zones for people to explore, new monsters to kill, and lotsa new items. A new player race — the lizardmen — have tails that they can use to hit people as an additional attack (as opposed to the kick attack).

In the graphics department, *The Ruins of Kunark* will feature an increased clipping distance and swaying trees, plus more polygons for the models. The expansion pack will be integrated into the game by a boat that will take players over to the new continent — purchasing this little expansion puppy will be the only way you'll be able to get there. Cheapskates who don't buy the pack will benefit from the new equipment, however — they just won't be able to acquire it first-hand. Sounds like a clever way to force all the gaming tightwads to buy the expansion pack, huh?

The next rule of Geek Club: If this is your first night at Geek Club, you must kill a rat.

AMA SUPERBIKE

DEVELOPER ⇢ Motorsims
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ... Motorcycle Racing
RELEASE DATE ⇢ Now
DISTRIBUTION METHOD ⇢ Retail or download at www.motorsims.com

Motorsims swears that *AMA Superbike* is the most realistic AMA bike sim out there. If you care about that sort of thing, this game will likely have the details you're after. For the rest of us, it's a multiplayer bike racing game that pits you against a whole bunch of other real-life people. And though it's mainly going to attract hardcore racing sim fans, *AMA* has different modes for beginners, Superbike and Motorcross arenas, and Formula racing. In addition, racers can team up for rally racing contests that can last up to two hours.

Players can hook up on the developers' website, the Motorsims Racing Network, which will provide different arenas based on skill level and the obligatory chat functionality online gamers have come to expect. More community-building features such as message boards, stats, and scores from the AMA world will be provided as well.

How will they keep people coming back month after month? Plans include a worldwide ranking system and a leaderboard that tracks your performance in the virtual AMA circuit (all reproduced from actual tracks). With support for up to 30 racers, Motorsims says that it has gone to great lengths to create a central network that will be able to support the bandwidth necessary for fast gameplay. And it's all about bandwidth, since racing games are an online gaming source currently untapped due to the technological limitations. We're hoping Motorsims has solved these problems, and that this is just the start of great online racing.

We firmly believe that *AMA Superbike* is easily the most massively multiplayer game on two wheels.

BATTLETECH 3025

DEVELOPER ⇢ Kesmai Studios
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ... Mech combat
RELEASE DATE ⇢ Spring 2000
DISTRIBUTION METHOD ⇢ TBA, download, check www.battletech3025.com for details

It's sorta like a massively multiplayer game of *Mech 3* — as in 50,000 players at once. That's pretty massive. You play the role of a Mech pilot and must swear loyalty to one of five houses, each with room for 10,000 players. Then, you duke it out with other houses in big-ass wars. There are over 1900 planets in the game universe and each is a unique location where players can meet and fight. In addition to first-person perspective, hardware-accelerated combat, *MPBT: 3025* has

We've no idea what's going on here, but it looks complicated.

strategy and roleplaying elements, since each battle won or lost affects the larger war and you have to climb the ranks from a newbie MechWarrior to a decorated veteran.

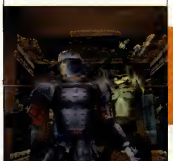
While you're fighting your own wars, your superior officers (other players) are planning to take the enemy's planetary capital and drive them out of the system. The highest generals can start even larger offensives on an interstellar scale according to the overall strategies of the house leaders. As you prove yourself in battle, you can be promoted and be given greater command over the strategic level, until you gain control of a military hierarchy composed of thousands of players. Woo woo, go me!

ASHERON'S CALL

DEVELOPER ⇢ Turbine Entertainment
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ... RPG
RELEASE DATE ⇢ December 1999
DISTRIBUTION METHOD ⇢ Retail, one month free play followed by $9.95/month, exclusively playable over the MSN Gaming Zone

Yes, there are more MMRPGs (if you don't know what that stands for, you probably shouldn't be reading this) in the works, not the least of which is Microsoft's *Asheron's Call*. Its main distinguishing trait is the allegiance system. With this, new players are actively recruited to pledge allegiance to the flag of the ... no, to more powerful players, who then help them out with weapons and money, and stuff like that. In return, the lieges get more notoriety and a share of the experience points that are shared with their fellow underlings. It's all just a big pyramid scheme (like Asheron's Amway), and it's a pretty ingenious method of getting players to return, as well as encouraging social interaction, of a geeky sort.

Asheron's Call also sets itself apart from the pack with features like more detailed character creation (not following traditional class lines — instead focused more on what skills you wish to study) and a magic system whereby the power of a spell is determined by how frequently it's cast. More than 20,000 people were involved in the extensive phases of beta testing. Since then, Turbine has implemented a lot of changes to game balance and content. They've introduced trade skills, tons of new quests and dungeons, improved graphics of human models and animations, as well as new weapons, magic items, and monsters. The developers plan on keeping the action lively with events that will have big effects on the world — such as the destruction of a whole city. Sounds pretty cool.



Come on you guys, stop laughing at me!

LOOKING AHEAD

Even further on the horizon, gamers the world over are looking forward to Sierra's *Middle Earth* and Origin's *Ultima Online 2*. Here at **PCXL**, we're skeptical as always, as the latter promises a "new 3D graphics engine" in its press release (likely to be a modified version of the engine to be powering the forthcoming *Ultima Ascension*), while *Middle Earth* was a victim of delays from the Sierra shakedown, but the commitment seems to be in place. The game should be out just in time for the release of the new movies — what a fortunate coincidence!

NEED FOR SPEED: MOTOR CITY

DEVELOPER --> EA
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ...
Used car salesman game
RELEASE DATE --> Q2 2000
DISTRIBUTION METHOD --> Retail

After watching *Everquest* turn into an Internet phenomenon and raking it in with *Ultima Online*, it's no surprise that Electronic Arts is crafting yet another massively multiplayer universe. What is shocking is they're actually branching into a game we might like — one that doesn't involve dwarfs and characters with names like "Unferth the Unready." Call us pessimists, but we were convinced that persistent online worlds were going to stay nerdily cemented in the clutches of games like *Eversmock* and *UO*.

Happily, EA is getting into driving games, too; massively multiplayer racing with licensed American cars to be exact. And it's using the company's well-worn and comfortable *Need for Speed* license as the launching pad. Still under development at EA Seattle, *Need for Speed: Motor City* is part *American Graffiti*, part *Hot Rod* magazine, and part (cough) *Ultima Online* (just the good part, though, the part where stuff is online).

What's impressive here isn't that you'll build your car and race against others. And it's not just that you'll be able to beat that punk from Nebraska, take his pink slip, and sell his junker for an engine upgrade of your own. What's really cool is that EA is aiming to build a persistent community of various players and dealers — a real economy where you can be a pure racer or a car-building specialist, crafting new cars and selling them through the game's classified section.

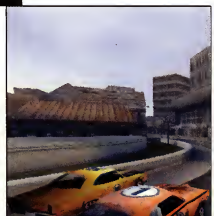
Luckily for EA, the game is being built by the *Need For Speed* team. Though *Motor City* isn't likely to hit stores until next spring, it's already looking better than the team's greatest achievement, *Need For Speed: High Stakes*. Underneath the graphics hood, there's also an improved damage modeling system and a realistic physics model.

Players can log on with a set amount of virtual *Motor City* cash, then go buy a new or used car for use in different types of races. The Competition Circuit is sanctioned racing on cordoned-off tracks, while Challenge Racing "taps directly into the hot rod culture," according to Motor City Producer Jim Edmunds. This challenge will feature well-crafted community areas in which to lay the racing gauntlet at the feet of others online, challenging them for straight-up cash or pink slips — the loser goes home without a car.

Expect dozens of '50s, '60s, and '70s licensed cars to risk (Ford and GM have signed up and a third American auto maker is in discussions), either in stock configurations straight from the factory, or used with all the upgrades, tweaks and damage the previous owner provided. These customized cars will be the heart and soul of the game's economy. Because the autos are fully tweakable, with 180 individual parts (EA even went so far as to nab licenses for engine and tailpipe upgrades), cars, parts, and paint jobs will be sold and swapped.

Bottom line: Players will specialize in whatever they find the most enjoyable method of making a buck, whether it be as a pure racer or as a grease monkey who haunts the game's junkyard area, selling the refurbished cars at a profit. You can make your living as a paint-job artist or even a parts middleman. EA plans to let supply and demand set the prices for cars, parts, and paint jobs.

Judging by the white board notes in the company's meeting room, they're still hashing out exactly how it will all work. Because the company has spent the last two years building the Internet infrastructure this game will require, our smart money says there will likely be a $10 monthly charge. And we're betting it will be well worth it.



How can you truly win a car race if you haven't first won the human race? (Or so our fortune cookie said.)

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

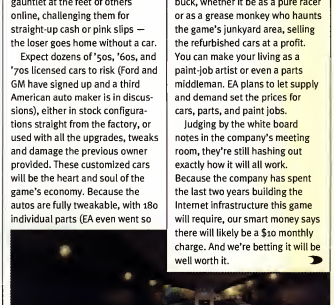
Someday all this massively multiplayer nonsense will be all-encompassing. Imagine a world where every single game would be played on the same virtual planet, where the *Quake* Marine could jump on a *Links LS* server and pick off anyone using the Payne Stewart baggy pants model. It really could happen, and here is a look at some of the more interesting collisions of worlds.

NEW GAME --> *Drakan!*
COMBO --> *Drakan* and *Flyf*
HILARITY ENSUES WHEN --> Some bearded guy playing *Flyf* gets thrust into a world with color, polygons, and fire-breathing dragons. Of course this can only be considered hilarity if you find humor in heart attacks

NEW GAME --> *Everquestion?*
COMBO --> *Everquest* and *You Don't Know Jack*
HILARITY ENSUES WHEN --> *Everquest* players go on eBay to sell answers to the questions for $5,000

NEW GAME --> *Dungeon Peeper*
COMBO --> *Dungeon Keeper* and *June: An Erotic Adventure*
HILARITY ENSUES WHEN --> Torture chambers turn into mass orgy rooms featuring Marilyn Chambers. Ok, so it's not hilarity, but it would be kinda cool

NEW GAME --> *Tiberian City*
COMBO --> *Tiberian Sun* and *Sim City*
HILARITY ENSUES WHEN --> After a day of earnest building, the *Sim City* gamer is shocked to find sims complaining because, "Artillery units are parked too close to our house and they unbalance the game due to their long range effectiveness against infantry"



It's like you're really driving in Detroit, except without the constant carjacking.

I'M A PLAYER

If you're into the coolest gear, DJ interviews, fast cars, big-screen TVs, DVDs, science fiction, cool movies, and love Babes. If you want breaking news on the latest consoles like the PSX2 and Dreamcast, or want codes, cheats, strategies, and the most in-depth previews and reviews on all gaming systems.

Why aren't you here - www.ign.com

NOT A FIGHTER

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HOMEWORLD

IT'S NOT A SHAME, IT'S A STRAGEDY!™

The depth of tactics in Relic's *Homeworld* is pretty amazing considering (1) there aren't all that many units to build and (2) there are no terrain "features" that you've come to expect in RTS games, like bottlenecks and high ground. The depth comes from the well thought-out balance, the specialization of the ships, and the 3D space in which you maneuver. You're going to need our help. Here it is.

"Ow, quit it ... ow, quit it ... ow, quit it ..."

TIPS

GET DEFENSIVE

It's tempting to spend all your money on wave after wave of strike craft and/or intimidating capital ships, but if you leave your mothership unguarded even for a moment, an opportunistic enemy with a sensor array might pick that moment to hyperspace his fleet in. So ensure your mothership's safety with ships such as defenders, capital ships, and minelayers.

BE AGGRESSIVE

From the get-go, send some scouts over to any red dots out there, and use the Z key to give them a speed boost. Attack any targets of opportunity such as resource collectors, or even pester the mothership. Even if you don't score many successes, t he idea is to set up a psychological advantage by hitting the enemy early and letting him know that you're there. Try to dictate the pace of battle this way.

CONTROL RESOURCES

For most of the game, enemy resource ships should be your main target, even more than the enemy mothership, since resource ships are much easier to kill. If you can control resource pockets early on by moving heavy forces over there or even the mothership itself, that can pay off big time in the long run. Getting minelayers to mine the central pocket of resources (in every multiplayer map) will create a formidable or at least extremely annoying defense.

DON'T OVERSPEND

Try to have a nest egg in the bank at all times. You never know when you'll need that extra ship. Retire any unused ships to get a little extra. Especially in hyperspace games, you want to keep that 1,500 RU minimum for your mothership to beat a hasty retreat.

TIMING IS KEY

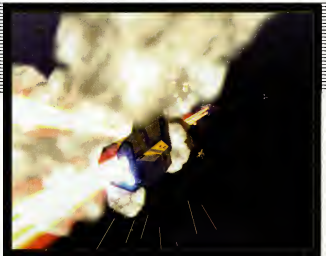
Don't just "crank and build" like you would in *StarCraft*. Knowing when to attack is crucial. Get a feel for the pace of the battle as soon as you can, learn your enemy's playing style and adjust to it. If it's a resource-grabbing, Sim Base-ing game, you can go along with it and build your fleet, but try to be sneaky and chip away, in order to lure him into an ambush or expose a weak point.

Likewise, if it's a frantic constant attacking game, adjust to that accordingly and either build more defenses to maximize your money or save up for one decisive strike. Remember — it takes a long time for your capital ships to get from one side of the map to the other (unless hyperspacing is on).

The carrier kinda looks like it's made it's made out Legos, and they ran out of pieces.

Look at the headings — we believe these tips can be applied to "real life"

I'll get you next time, Gadget!



Ed says, "Uhh ... big ships go boom."

TACTICS

SHIP FORMATIONS

CLAW FORMATION ···› Works best for Interceptors or Attack Bombers, because it focuses a long stream of fire at a single target and overlaps fields of fire.

WALL FORMATION ···› Great for lots of capital ships, since they can overlap fields of fire while still being able to maneuver and get good coverage.

X FORMATION ···› Works best if you really want to kill a single target as fast as possible. It's good for concentrated attackers like Attack Bombers, Heavy Corvettes, or Ion Frigates.

SPHERE FORMATION ···› Handy both for defense and offense. You can circle a vulnerable target like the Mothership with a bunch of ships in sphere and they will surround it, facing outward. On offense they will encircle a single target and continuously fire at it — great for killing resource ships.

DON'T BE A NEWBIE ···› Hit the shift key while moving to use the third dimension. Think outside the box and be proactive.

···› Attack capital ships from top or bottom, especially Ion Frigates.

···› Always have your Defenders on Evasive tactics — this will maximize their survivability, mainly because of their high maneuverability and their good armor.

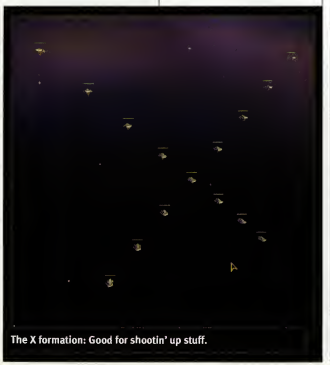
···› Timing is important when maneuvering capital ships. Don't forget that they can fire while moving, so taunt and circle your opponent to keep him scrambling.

RESEARCH

Always have all your bays researching the same thing. This is more efficient and will help you focus your tech tree.

···› In the early to middle stages of the game, try to specialize in one area, i.e. capital ships or corvettes, instead of dabbling in everything.

···› Have a series of goals, in terms of ships that you want to build, and then prioritize them.



The X formation: Good for shootin' up stuff.

Mmm, donuts ...

Rumor has it this is also what our company's much-touted "Flying Machine" looks like.

When you're getting pissed, and diplomacy fails, try salvaging: "It's the other white meat."

MORE TIPS

···> Get Defenders before any other fighter class. They're the best defense for the money through the early stages of the game.

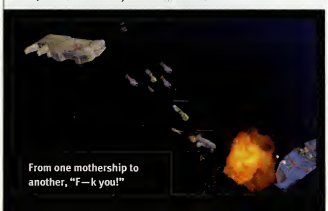
···> For almost any situation, mixing a diverse group of ships is vital. Building tons of capital ships is asking for trouble from masses of strike craft or salvage corvettes.

···> Be sure to save money for hyperspacing. If you're aware of the enemy mothership's location and know its defenses are weak, save up enough money to send in a strike force that can get the job done. Also, it's wise to keep just enough cash for your mothership — that way you can hightail it if it gets jumped.

···> The Launch Manager is your friend, learn to use it and you can lure the enemy into ambushes. Keep your strike craft docked in your Mothership and Carrier to make it appear that you have no defenses, then launch them when you see them coming, and laugh triumphantly at their shocked cries of "Ambush."

···> Recon is also your friend — keep up with regular Probes at the enemy motherships to see what's up. Even when you get a Sensor Array, use probes to check on the exact makeup of enemy fleets. Just finding the mothership sometimes can be the signal you're waiting for to hyperspace your fleet to attack.

···> Keep the supply lines up, particularly if you've got a lot of strike craft. Ensure that Support Frigates and Repair Corvettes are around to refuel them.



From one mothership to another, "F—k you!"

SPOTLIGHTS ON!!!

DEFENDERS

FIREPOWER ···> 30
ARMOR ···> 280
COVERAGE ···> 90%
MAX VELOCITY ···> 385 m/s
PRICE ···> 65

These are flat-out the best fighters. Their main advantage is their heavy armor — more than double that of any other fighter. This extends their lifetime to ridiculous proportions when fighting other strike craft (except other defenders). Combined with their maneuverability, pound for pound, they are the best defense you can buy. Put a bunch (at least 15 or more) on evasive mode and send them at a group of enemy ships. At the very least they will occupy a much greater number of ships for long periods of time, freeing you to attack vulnerable targets of opportunity with beefier ships like Ion Frigates. Their versatility is almost unmatched in *Homeworld* conflicts.

MINELAYER CORVETTES

FIREPOWER ···> 183
ARMOR ···> 1800
COVERAGE ···> 100%
MAX VELOCITY ···> 425 m/s
PRICE ···> 295

If used effectively, these ships can passively change the outcome of a game. Select them and hit Z to activate their minelaying. They will drop little turd-like mines indefinitely until you tell them to stop. Once active, these mines will home in on any enemy ship that enters their activation range. They'll make quick work of any resource collector that passes through the area. Also, they'll make the enemy rethink his approach to attacking you, which will give you time to counterattack. A nice trick: Take a bunch of them, set them in sphere formation around your mothership, then have them lay a minefield. The only drawback to using mines is that they have a relatively short lifespan, so eventually you will have to take the time to re-mine areas that have become defunct.

SALVAGE CORVETTES

FIREPOWER ···> n/a
ARMOR ···> 1200
COVERAGE ···> n/a
MAX VELOCITY ···> 425 m/s
PRICE ···> 220

These ships can almost single-handedly win the game for you if used skillfully. It's not unheard of for some players to make Salvage Corvettes the mainstay of their fleet. Why? Well, since it costs money to make ships, isn't it easier just to steal 'em? This serves the dual purpose of reducing the number of enemy ships while simultaneously building your own fleet. Basically, you need to use Salvage Corvettes in tandem with Strike Craft or mines to be most effective. When the enemy sends in his big, bad capital ships, distract them with a bunch of defenders set on evasive mode, then send in the whole mess of salvage corvettes to

We think that if Homer Simpson read gaming mags, he'd really be into PCXL PC ACCELERATOR December 1999 http://www.pcxl.com

scoop 'em up. This will work great on all capital ships except Heavy Cruisers (unsalvageable), Missile Destroyers (can shoot you while you salvage), and Drone Frigates (ditto). They are particularly effective on all other frigates, especially Ion and Destroyers. The amount you need to salvage a ship depends on its size. For example, two can do away with all the frigates, but you need five for the super-heavy ships. Don't forget the joys of salvaging resource ships, too.

MISSILE DESTROYERS

FIREPOWER --› 450
ARMOR --› 42000
COVERAGE --› 100%
MAX VELOCITY --› 295
PRICE --› 1500

Probably the most versatile capital ship in the game. With its salvos of guided missiles, they are deadly against strike craft and pack a punch against capital ships as well. Its special ability, Missile Volley, will speed up its fire rate for a short period of time (simply use Z and left-click to activate). They are well-suited for defense, since just a few can hold off a much greater number of attacking ships — so having a bunch in an offensive group is an excellent idea.

CARRIERS

FIREPOWER --› 109
ARMOR --› 72000
COVERAGE --› 100%
MAX VELOCITY --› 300
PRICE --› 2000

Think of these as the Daughterships, since they are effectively smaller versions of the big mama. First off, if you have one, you don't lose the game when your Mothership gets smoked, which justifies their existence in itself. But they can also build any ship in the game except for super heavy ships (which makes sense, cuz then a carrier could build another carrier). So the strategic possibilities with carriers are wide ranging, from serving as the center of a mobile strikeforce, to holding down a resource pocket, to simply storing and refueling tons of strike craft.

SHIP BREAKDOWN

FIGHTER CLASS

SCOUT
A hugely useful ship if only because it can speed burst (Z key) around the map like a flea on crack. Good for diversions, sneak attacks, and just pestering the enemy.

INTERCEPTOR
Like an improved Scout without the speed burst. You're better off with Defenders or Bombers.

DEFENDER
(see spotlight)

CLOAKED FIGHTER
Almost as good as Interceptors in terms of effectiveness, but they can sneak into enemy territory if they don't have any Proximity sensors. These are good for sneak attacks on resource ships.

ATTACK BOMBER
A group of 12-15 on Aggressive mode and in X formation can take out frigates in one or two passes. But their high cost can make building too many a big risk.

DEFENSE FIGHTER (TAIDAN ONLY)
They can deflect any fire from enemy strike craft, so throw 'em into a big melee and see what happens. Hint: It's pretty cool.

CORVETTE CLASS

LIGHT CORVETTE
Pretty much useless. They are outclassed by other strike craft in every area. Their one asset, speed, isn't even as good as the multi-gun corvette. Since they don't specialize in anything, their effectiveness isn't really that great.

HEAVY CORVETTE
Tough and can pack a punch with its Charged Burst attack. Hold down Z and left-click on a target. You'll want to have multiple heavy corvettes if you're going to build these at all.

REPAIR CORVETTE
Set these to repair a single ship or group and they'll follow them around repairing damage. The effect is cumulative, so the more the merrier.

SALVAGE CORVETTE
(see spotlight)

MULTI-GUN CORVETTE
The most versatile fighting corvette because of its outstanding coverage and speed. Perfect for escorting resource collectors and defending them from salvage corvettes and strike craft. They can be useful to support a group of capital ships as well. You can't go wrong building these.

MINELAYER CORVETTE
(see spotlight)

LITTLE RED CORVETTE
It has a pocketful of horses and Trojans (some of them used). Move over baby, give me the keys, I want to drive your little red love machine ... Little Red Corvette ... Baby you're much too fast ... Uh huh ... Little Red Corvette ...

CAPITAL CLASS

ASSAULT FRIGATE
The most versatile capital ship, but also the weakest ship that can actually fight. These are well-suited for all stages of the game, however, from protecting resource ships to defending more vulnerable ion and support frigates from attack. Good against fighters and capital ships.

ION CANNON FRIGATE
The most commonly built capital ship, because of its power and overall coolness. A bunch of these in X or Wall formation is a formidable threat. You just need to protect them against strike craft and Salvage Corvettes.

SUPPORT FRIGATE
These frigates can refuel strike craft, but can also repair all ships including your mothership.

DRONE FRIGATE (KUSHAN ONLY)
Good firepower. Like the Missile Destroyer in that it is great for taking out strike craft. Also, it rebuilds any destroyed drones over time at no cost. Overall, this is a great investment and often underused.

DEFENSE FIELD FRIGATE (TAIDAN ONLY)
A nice toy for the Taidan, they can stop all enemy fire in its range except for ion beams, missiles, and mines. Best of all, they'll ruin the days of enemy attack bombers and multi-gun corvettes real quick.

SUPER-HEAVY CLASS

MISSILE DESTROYER
(see spotlight)

CARRIER
(see spotlight)

DESTROYER
You'll feel a lot better about building these bad boys than you will two Ion Frigates. They can really dish out the damage against other Capital ships, and they have almost as much coverage as Assault Frigates, which makes them able to defend themselves from strike craft.

HEAVY CRUISER
The big daddy of the battlefield. There really aren't any down sides to building one of these, but it's not necessary or practical to even think about them until the late stages of the game where you have lots of money. Since it's so slow, you'll mostly use it for defense until it's time to attack the enemy mothership.

RESOURCE SHIPS

RESOURCE COLLECTOR
Your best friend. Build lots of 'em at the beginning of the game to increase your income, since it's all about getting more money faster than the other guy. You can always retire them later. Keeping them well guarded is of utmost importance.

RESOURCE CONTROLLER
These are just as vital as the collector, since they can speed up your rate of income many times over. Similarly, keep these well protected since both ships will be prime targets of opportunity. They can also refuel strike craft as an added bonus.

SPECIALTY SHIPS

PROBE
Use 'em early and often to see what direction the enemy is specializing their fleet.

PROXIMITY SENSOR
Good for detecting cloaked ships, or to monitor resource pockets.

SENSOR ARRAY
Ahh, it's like a legal map cheat, it shows you the entire map.

CLOAK GENERATOR
You have to activate it to use it, and it's good for cloaking big important ships like the Carrier but can also be used in Salvage runs to good effect.

GRAV WELL GENERATOR
Can freeze all enemy Strike Craft leaving them helpless. However, they must be manually activated.

RESEARCH SHIP
You know what this does. Can be used to clear minefields after you've researched the whole tech tree.

If it's important to you, it's on your DailyRadar

DailyRadar.com will take your

browser by storm on October 18th with five channels: PC Game Radar, Sega Radar, Nintendo Radar, Sony Radar, and Showbiz Radar.

These channels will get your attention with:

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1999

THE YEAR IN REVIEWS

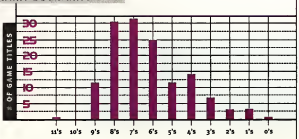
Some games kicked ass, and some games *were* ass — consider this your definitive guide to every variation of ass in '99

As you head to your local software store this holiday season with that impersonal (and kinda cheap) $30 gift certificate from your senile grandmother, you're likely to find that any decent new game will be well out of that price range. Rather than spend your own hard-earned cash, you could always scour the bargain bin for a slightly older, but still great, game. Use this as a guide to scouring the bargain bin and be sure to thank Grandma Nellie (who is probably worth millions) for her "generous" gift — the old hag.

THE NUMBERS RARELY, IF EVER, LIE

Total Games Reviewed →	151
Number of games that were sequels or a continuing series →	49
Percentage of sequels to "original" game ideas →	32%
Avg score of all games reviewed →	5.9
Avg score of all games with the word "Extreme" in the title →	2.3
Avg score of all games with Dark, Shadow, or other references to darkness in the title →	6.3
Avg score of all sequels (or continuing in a series, eg. *Madden 2000*) →	6.7
Avg score of all games that use an alliteration in the title (eg. *Rival Realms*) →	6.5
Avg score of all games with one word titles (includes hyphens: eg. *Half-Life*) →	6.5
Avg score of all games to appear on our cover →	7.4
Avg score of all games which scored 8 →	8.0

WHAT GOT WHAT?



THE REVIEWERS

PCXL ratings are always based on the entire staff's collective opinion, but the reviewer – who actually plays the game all the way through – has the most say in its final score. Here we take a look at some interesting numbers to see just who is the toughest and easiest on games.

Rob Smith
Avg Score Given → 8.6
Highest Score → 11
Lowest Score → 7

TENDENCIES → Being in charge of our reviews section, Rob only reviews the very best games. This explains his abnormally high average (so he keeps telling us)
WHAT HE LOOKS FOR → A fast-paced game with depth. And the little sissy loves to be scared
WHAT ANNOYS HIM → Jammy buggers and gits. He also hates games he's not good at

Mike Salmon
Avg Score Given → 5.9
Highest Score → 8
Lowest Score → 3

TENDENCIES → Prefers doing all work under the influence of alcohol, gets mad when we don't let him
WHAT HE LOOKS FOR → A game that immerses the player in another world and can be played quietly during work hours so no one knows
WHAT ANNOYS HIM → Overhyped crap, bad design, and the staff of **PCXL**

Ed Lee
Avg Score Given → 7.0
Highest Score → 9
Lowest Score → 4

TENDENCIES → To give games an 8 or a 4. Ed despises reviews that don't state the obvious — is it good or does it suck?
WHAT HE LOOKS FOR → A game that will take him away from *Eversmack* (yet to find one)
WHAT ANNOYS HIM → Long-awaited sequels that do nothing new, and waking up before noon

Chuck Osborn
Avg Score Given → 6.1
Highest Score → 8
Lowest Score → 3

TENDENCIES → Gets stuck reviewing the games too good for freelancers and not good enough for the more senior staffers
WHAT HE LOOKS FOR → A chance to stop being the "new guy," (and he's not afraid to do "whatever it takes," Rob)
WHAT ANNOYS HIM → The voices in his head — they just won't shut up

Jason D'Aprile
Avg Score Given → 7.7
Avg Score Given before **PCXL** marks it down → 8.7
Highest Score → 9
Lowest Score → 6 (originally 8)

TENDENCIES → To give everything an 8 — the kid just loves games. Go figure
WHAT HE LOOKS FOR → Women mostly — again, to no avail
WHAT ANNOYS HIM → **PCXL** staffers and our unswaying belief that he is waaaay too easy on games

Dead Ex-PCXL Staffers
Avg Score Given → 5.7
Highest Score → 9
Lowest Score → 0

TENDENCIES → Unfortunate destiny with mysterious calamities
WHAT THEY LOOKED FOR → A way out of **PCXL** alive — to no avail
WHAT ANNOYED THEM → Dying

PCXL Art Staff
Avg Score Given → 4.0
Highest Score → 4
Lowest Score → 4

TENDENCIES → To play games on the Mac
WHAT THEY LOOK FOR → Pretty textures
WHAT ANNOYS THEM → There are never any games for the Mac

Canadian Reviewers
(and other freelancers that might as well live in Canada)
Avg Score Given → 6.4
Highest Score → 8
Lowest Score → 5

TENDENCIES → To say "eh" a lot and tend to think of themselves as real studs (despite the obvious)
WHAT THEY LOOK FOR → A little respect from the world
WHAT ANNOYS THEM → Canada-bashing on the **PCXL** website

PC Gamer writers freelancing for PCXL
Avg Score Given in **PCXL** → 6.0
Avg Score of same games in PC Gamer → 8.1 (or 81%)
Highest Score → 8
Lowest Score → 1

TENDENCIES → To rate games honestly in **PCXL**, while "bumping" the score up in their own rag
WHAT THEY LOOK FOR → Any multiplayer game at which they can actually beat us (only one so far)
WHAT ANNOYS THEM → Continually losing to us

Reviewers that wear driving gloves ...
Avg Score Given in **PCXL** → 6.3
Highest Score → 8
Lowest Score → 4

TENDENCIES → To write entire review without any punctuation or paragraph breaks
WHAT THEY LOOK FOR → Any excuse to play pool and an excuse to avoid an irate Rob Smith
WHAT ANNOYS THEM → An irate Rob Smith

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/6906/. Look like this? Run to the barbershop — now!

Half-Life has taken up over half our lives as well.

MechWarrior— a true classic.

Thief stole a lot of our time.

THE PERFECT 10 ... ERR ... 11

Half-Life

DEVELOPER → Valve
PUBLISHER → Sierra

In f--ing credible! The Game of the Year by a mile, this is currently the pinnacle of the first-person action genre. If you don't own it, you can't consider yourself a real gamer

THE NINERS

Thief – The Dark Project

DEVELOPER → Looking Glass
PUBLISHER → Eidos

Surprisingly good game considering there's no major explosions and action

Grim Fandango

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts

Best adventure game on PC, the mix of great music, interface-less design, and comedy characters sealed it as a classic

Fallout 2

DEVELOPER → Black Isle Studios
PUBLISHER → Interplay

Post-apocalyptic RPG with adult themes

Everquest

DEVELOPER → Verant Interactive
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios

Crack is far less addictive than this game that saw the PCXL office productivity shot to hell

Descent 3

DEVELOPER → Outrage Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Tantrum/Interplay

Long awaited and much loved

High Heat 2000

DEVELOPER → Team .366
PUBLISHER → 3DO

Purest baseball game we've seen

FIFA 99

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

Stupid sport, great PC game

Links LS 99

DEVELOPER → Access
PUBLISHER → Access

This game IS PC golf

System Shock II

DEVELOPER → Irrational Games
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

Even better than trend-setting original despite the high difficulty level and complex design

Need for Speed – High Stakes

DEVELOPER → EA Seattle
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

Another classic NFS racing game

MechWarrior 3

DEVELOPER → Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER → Microprose

The original gets even better

Tribes

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Dynamix

The ultimate team battle game

THE GREAT EIGHT

Team Fortress Classic

DEVELOPER → Valve
PUBLISHER → Sierra

Free *Half-Life* mod adds life

Rainbow Six – Eagle Watch

DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm

More levels and more bugs

Baldur's Gate

DEVELOPER → BioWare Corp.
PUBLISHER → Interplay

Old school RPG with multiplayer

StarCraft – Brood War

DEVELOPER → Blizzard
PUBLISHER → Blizzard

More *StarCraft* goodness for frantic fans

Sim City 3000

DEVELOPER → Maxis
PUBLISHER → EA

Deep and involving city-building game

Oddworld – Abe's Exoddus

DEVELOPER → GT Interactive
PUBLISHER → Oddworld Inhabitants

Odd, original, and kinda fun

Close Combat III – Russian Front

DEVELOPER → Atomic Games
PUBLISHER → Microsoft

Killing Russians is always good

Rollcage

DEVELOPER → ATD
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis

Another stellar looking racing game

RollerCoaster Tycoon

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Hasbro

A detailed amusement park sim

Aliens vs. Predator

DEVELOPER → Rebellion
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive

Ultimate FPS battle from movies

Might & Magic VII: For Blood & Honor

DEVELOPER → New World Computing
PUBLISHER → 3DO

Orcs will perish once again

Shadow Man

DEVELOPER → Iguana UK
PUBLISHER → Acclaim

Voodoo Raider with top-notch graphics

Rainbow Six – Rogue Spear

DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm

Technological nightmare and gameplay God

Starfleet Command

DEVELOPER → 14 Degrees East
PUBLISHER → Interplay

Hex-based Trekkie game with substance

Independence War Deluxe

DEVELOPER → Particle Systems
PUBLISHER → Infogrames

Space shooter with mucho style

Rites Of War

DEVELOPER → Dreamforge
PUBLISHER → SSI

Some deep, detailed strategy ... really

Madden 2000

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

Best football game on PC for the current year, though the competition is hotting up

Jack Nicklaus 6

DEVELOPER → Hypnos Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision

Great golf game for gambling – try out the skins option and ask Mike and Rob for tips

NBA Live 99

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

Best hoops game on PC

Superbike World Championship

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

Best game on two wheels

NFL Blitz

DEVELOPER → Point Of View
PUBLISHER → Midway

Arcade-style, bone crunching football action

International Cricket Captain

DEVELOPER → Empire
PUBLISHER → Empire

Good sim of stupid sport (unless you're British)

King's Quest – Mask of Eternity

DEVELOPER → Sierra
PUBLISHER → Sierra

More action than previous games

Moto Racer 2

DEVELOPER → Delphine Software
PUBLISHER → EA

Fast, furious, motorcyle racing goodness

Heretic II

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
PUBLISHER → Activision

Third-person shooter using Qlf engine that got plaudits despite the requirement to stare at male elf butt for the entire game

Viper Racing

DEVELOPER → MGI
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports

Great collision models, fun game

Sin

DEVELOPER → Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision

BooMB of average FPS gaming, though the "hidden" extra scene was a pleasant surprise

Global Domination

DEVELOPER → Psygnosis
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis

Weirdly entertaining game of *Risk*

Blood II: The Chosen

DEVELOPER → Monolith Productions
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive

Oops. Should have scored 6

Monaco Grand Prix Racing Sim

DEVELOPER → Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft

The best GP sim available

Alpha Centauri

DEVELOPER → Firaxis Games
PUBLISHER → EA

Sid Meier works magic again with turn-based space-set strategy opus

LUCKY (TO GET A) 7

Redline
DEVELOPER → Beyond Games
PUBLISHER → Accolade
Technological masterpiece two years ago

Redguard
DEVELOPER → Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER → Bethesda Softworks
Swashbuckling, computer crashing 3D action adventure game

Grand Prix Legends
DEVELOPER → Papyrus
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
Nostalgic Grand Prix racing game

Carmaggedon II
DEVELOPER → Stainless Software
PUBLISHER → Interplay
Gruesome car versus people mayhem

Future Cop
DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA
Mindless fun for short time

Speed Busters — American Highways
DEVELOPER → Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft
Great tracks, average everything else

Star Wars Episode One Racer
DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
Best SW game since *Jedi*, but a great option for an inter-office wager

Requiem — Avenging Angel
DEVELOPER → Cyclone Studios
PUBLISHER → 3Do
Great idea that didn't quite work

Wages of Sin
DEVELOPER → 2015 Inc./Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision
Code-bloated add-on pack for *Sin*

Machines
DEVELOPER → Carybdis, Inc.
PUBLISHER → Acclaim Entertainment
Unremarkable RTS unlikely to spawn sequel

Worms Armageddon
DEVELOPER → Team 17
PUBLISHER → Microprose
Addictive and hilarious worm combat

Midtown Madness
DEVELOPER → Angel Studios
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
Great multiplayer Windy City racing

Kingpin – Life of Crime
DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
F—king average first-person shooter game

Rogue Squadron 3D
DEVELOPER → Factor 5
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
Star Wars games need work

Myth II
DEVELOPER → Bungie
PUBLISHER → Bungie
Horrifically violent; not up to original's standard

Dungeon Keeper II
DEVELOPER → Bullfrog
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
Some sadistic dungeon-keepin' goodness

Heavy Gear II
DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
Good game, still no *MechWarrior 3*

Outcast
DEVELOPER → Appeal
PUBLISHER → Infogrames
Voxelicious French-crafted adventure game

Jagged Alliance II
DEVELOPER → Sir-Tech
PUBLISHER → Talonsoft
Mercenary strategy still on the turn-based boat

Army Men II
DEVELOPER → 3DO
PUBLISHER → 3DO
Little plastic men, shit control

NFL Fever 2000
DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
Great football game without stats

Ultimate 8-Ball
DEVELOPER → Mirage
PUBLISHER → THQ
Magic 8-Ball provides more fun

PGA Championship Golf 99
DEVELOPER → Headgate
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
Best multiplayer online golf, despite flaws

Triple Play 2000
DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA
Fast, pretty, and hyper unrealistic

Drakan
DEVELOPER → Surreal
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
Beautiful game with some issues

Star Trek – TNG: Birth of the Federation
DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Hasbro Interactive
Another average Star Trek game

Starseige
DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
Good, but nowhere near *MechWarrior 3*

Heroes of Might and Magic III
DEVELOPER → New World Computing
PUBLISHER → 3DO
Decent continuation of popular series

Magic and Mayhem
DEVELOPER → Mythos Games
PUBLISHER → Bethesda Softworks
More magic than actual mayhem

Turok II — Seeds of Evil
DEVELOPER → Iguana UK
PUBLISHER → Acclaim
N64 classic, average PC game

Uprising II
DEVELOPER → Cyclone Systems
PUBLISHER → 3DO
Like the first, but without originality value

Powerslide
DEVELOPER → Ratbag Games
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Fast, pretty, and quite redundant

SIX PACK

Cyberstrike II
DEVELOPER → Simutronics Corp
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
A criminally average Mech game

Dark Vengeance
DEVELOPER → Reality Bytes
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Third-person tragedy, not worth crap

Gangsters — Organized Crime
DEVELOPER → Hot House
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
Sim Inner City Capone style strategy game with too much micro-managing to be fun

FireTeam
DEVELOPER → Multitude, Inc.
PUBLISHER → Multitude, Inc.
Average online top-down team game

The Settlers III
DEVELOPER → Blue Byte
PUBLISHER → Blue Byte
Little fat people settling down

Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds
DEVELOPER → Rage Software
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
High concept, but poorly executed

Beavis and Butthead Do U
DEVELOPER → The Illusions Gaming Co.
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Occasionally funny, usually pretty stupid

Wargasm
DEVELOPER → Infogrames
PUBLISHER → Digital Image Design
Bad puns and average game

Warzone 2100
DEVELOPER → Eidos
PUBLISHER → Pumpkin Studios
3D RTS without any character

X-Wing Alliance
DEVELOPER → Totally Games
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
Great license, unoriginal licensed game

Recoil
DEVELOPER → Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
The very definition of average

Civilization – Call to Power
DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
Disappointing direction for *Civ* series

Lander
DEVELOPER → Psygnosis
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
Old style shooter with horrific control

Unreal Mission Pack – Return to Na Pali
DEVELOPER → Legend
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Disappointing mission pack to *Unreal*

Silver
DEVELOPER → Infogrames
PUBLISHER → Infogrames
Decent French console-style RPG with a format reminiscent of the *Final Fantasy* series

C&C: Tiberian Sun
DEVELOPER → Westwood
PUBLISHER → Westwood
Addictive, thousands of players available online, but sadly it's badly flawed

NBA Inside Drive
DEVELOPER → High Voltage Software
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
Another hoops game falls flat

Midtown Madness **hit the "*y*" mark.**

Rollercoaster Tycoon **got Chuck all wet.**

Heavy Gear **— still not as good as *MW3*.**

Force 21
DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm
It is no Rainbow Six

Re-Volt
DEVELOPER → Acclaim Studios
PUBLISHER → Acclaim Entertainment
Fun RC racing with great graphics and fun multiplayer, but major control issues

Pro 18 World Tour
DEVELOPER → Intelligent Games
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
Generic golf game from Europe

X-Games Pro Boarders
DEVELOPER → Radical
PUBLISHER → EA
ESPN should stick to TV

Microsoft Baseball 2000
DEVELOPER → Wizbang
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
At least it's cheap

Darkstone
DEVELOPER → Delphine
PUBLISHER → G.O.D.
Decent *Diablo* clone in 3D

Fatal Abyss
DEVELOPER → Human Soft
PUBLISHER → SegaSoft
A truly forgettable sub game

FIVES

Tomb Raider III
DEVELOPER → Core Design
PUBLISHER → Eidos
More of the same adventuring

Total Annihilation — Kingdoms
DEVELOPER → Cavedog
PUBLISHER → Cavedog
Lots of people loved it; **PCXL** didn't appreciate the tank-like fantasy creatures, so it fell flat

Civilization II — Test of Time
DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Hasbro Interactive
A great series gone bad

Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer
DEVELOPER → 3DO
PUBLISHER → 3DO
Even General Colin Powell says, "ass!"

Return to Krondor
DEVELOPER → PyroTechnix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
Return to Assdor: The Assening

Resident Evil II
DEVELOPER → Capcom
PUBLISHER → Capcom
The ultimate door-opening sim

Trophy Bass 3D
DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
No replacement for fishing for beer

Baseball Edition 2000
DEVELOPER → Interplay
PUBLISHER → Interplay
Good butts don't score points with **PCXL**

Mob Rule
DEVELOPER → Studio 3
PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster
Great cinemas + bad micromanagement = 5

Fleet Command
DEVELOPER → Sonalyst
PUBLISHER → Jane's/EA
Like *Battleship* with tremendous detail, but forgot about the fun

Star Wars — Phantom Menace
DEVELOPER → Big Ape Productions
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
Assified version of the movie

Trespasser
DEVELOPER → DreamWorks
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
Over-hyped, clunky, and generally shit, though innovative health meter scored points

FOUR SCORE

Test Drive V
DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade
Lower score than sequel number

Retribution (StarCraft Expansion)
DEVELOPER → WizardWorks
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Assing up *StorCraft* is blasphemy

South Park
DEVELOPER → Iguana
PUBLISHER → Acclaim
Ohmigod, they killed gameplay dude

Test Drive Off-Road II
DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade
Or *Test Drive Of-Ass*

Space Bunnies Must Die
DEVELOPER → Imx
PUBLISHER → Ripcord
This game should have died

Corsairs
DEVELOPER → Microids
PUBLISHER → Microids
Pirates without wenches or rum

Lands of Lore III
DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios
PUBLISHER → Westwood Studios
Game that nearly scored itself – despite a solid pedigree, a terrible engine ruins it all

Braveheart
DEVELOPER → Red Lemon
PUBLISHER → Eidos
Bugs, bugs, bugs, and that's just the Scots' kilts, never mind the confusing gameplay

Official Formula One Racing
DEVELOPER → Lankhor
PUBLISHER → Eidos
Officially formulaic and quite useless

THREE'S A PILE OF ASS

Jeff Gordon XS Racing
DEVELOPER → Rval Sports
PUBLISHER → ASC Games
Product placement racing game ass

Links Extreme
DEVELOPER → Access Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
Golf IS NOT EXTREME, capice?

Extreme Tennis
DEVELOPER → Head Games
PUBLISHER → Activision
Tennis IS NOT EXTREME, OK?

Baseball Mogul
DEVELOPER → Infinite Monkey
PUBLISHER → WizardWorks
My First Baseball Management Sim

Skiing 99
DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
Downhill pretty much says it all

Evil Core – Fallen Cities
DEVELOPER → ABTS Intelligent Group
PUBLISHER → Tri-synergy
Pure evil on a CD and lucky to ever be released

Blood II: The Nightmare Levels
DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
Worse than nightmares with midgets

TAKES TWO TO SUCK ASS

Thunder Brigade
DEVELOPER → Blue Moon Interactive
PUBLISHER → Interactive Magic
Thunderous atrocity of a game

TNN Outdoors – Pro Hunter
DEVELOPER → DreamForge
PUBLISHER → ASC Games
Unreal engine + hunting game = ?

NASCAR Revolution
DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA
Talkin' 'bout a NASCAR Assolution

ONE IS THE LONELIEST NUMBER

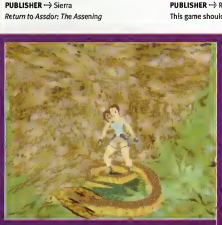
Extreme Bullrider
DEVELOPER → Radish Works
PUBLISHER → HeadGames
Extreme Bullshit would be better

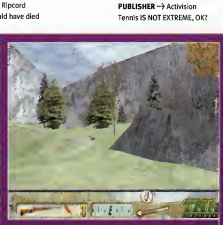
Rival Realms
DEVELOPER → Digital Integration
PUBLISHER → Titus
Few games rival its strategy suckitude

Skydive!
DEVELOPER → Gonzo Games
PUBLISHER → EA
Never should have been made

ZERO

Football Pro '99
DEVELOPER → Sierra Sports
PUBLISHER → Sierra
The very dirtiest bottom of the barrel


We have to run at least one shot of Lara.


TNN Pro Hunter — looks exciting, huh?

Spoce Bunnies Must Die. We agree.

FALCON GAMING PCS CAN HANDLE THE BIGGEST GAME OUT THERE.

In the wastelands of the 31st Century, the machines rule the battlefield.
To join the fight, you need Mechwarrior 3. To survive, you need a great machine.
To win, you need to play it on a Falcon.

To get your hands on a 'Mech, visit your local retailer or go to www.mechwarrior3.com.

MECHWARRIOR3

To get your hands on a Falcon Northwest Gaming PC:
1-888-325-2661
WWW.FALCON-NW.COM

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Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411**: Product Number 108

Sports Illu-Xtra-ted

DECEMBER 1999

The Ultimate Sports Games

If they build them, we'll play 'em

PLUS:

DUELING EDITORS

VIRTUAL ATHLETES

BRUCE CAMPBELL INTERVIEW

PCXL P.I.

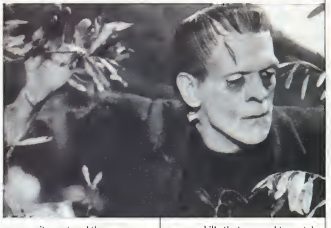
AND JUST A TINY BIT MORE

Special Santa Suit Edition

The *ULTIMATE* Sports Game

Think Dr. Frankenstein with a football in his hand. Now think Neve Campbell and Denise Richards making out in *Wild Things*. Pretty hot, eh? But it's not Frankenstein's monster's neck bolts that get us revved up. We're googly-eyed with desire over the possibility of taking the best parts of our favorite sports titles and crafting them into the ultimate sports monster. Then we'd plug that baby in, let the electricity flow, and set the horny bastard loose on the gaming public.

Well, Mr. Developer, PCXL has picked the best limbs and organs from our all-time favorites, so you'll be able to make us a walking, talking, sports zombie that would make John Madden and Victor Frankenstein proud, and the French quiver with fear.



FOOTBALL

God save the souls who toiled (though obviously not enough) on Sierra's ultimately doomed *Football Pro '99*. It was our last hope for a hybrid football game with perfectly tuned gameplay and the statistical and league-building depth that we crave. Now these developers will be remembered as the team that killed one of the great PC football franchises in computer game history — not just ending the series, but pushing Sierra into making "extreme" sports games like bullriding and Howie Long-style smoke-jumping.

So what about this amalgam? First, take the sheer joy, excitement, and frenetic gameplay of one of our first sports game loves, *Atori Football* — the arcade antique with two trackballs and Xs and Os representing the players. Add the in-your-face, buddy-on-buddy gamesmanship of *TECMO Bowl* for the NES (without the "Montana to Rice" money play). Patch on a healthy dose of gameplay and statistical mastery from what probably remains the pinnacle of computer football achievement, Dynamix's *Football Pro*, slick it up EA style (*Madden '99 – 2000* is much less slick) and render the whole thing using the stunning graphics from the Dreamcast's *NFL 2000*. This would truly be a football monster to behold.

BASKETBALL

Though we've fallen in love with the gorgeous visuals in *NBA Live* and cheered and jeered our pixelated players in the NES version of *Double Dribble*, basketball games have never quite captured the game nearly as well as football titles.

That said, there have been plenty of games through the years that started us dribbling, both on the court and on our shirts. The cleverly titled *Basketball* for the Atari 2600 is a perfect example of the excitement these titles can create, as well as the inherent troubles posed in capturing said game. This was the first game to use a trapezoid court to recreate what many called "3D" at the time and featured two blocky players heaving the square ball around like cubist-rendered robots. A few years later *Double Dribble* for the NES brought actual five-on-five action that let you zip passes up and down the court with the fervor of the '80s Lakers on crank, sending players feverishly punching those blocky NES pads for a last-second shot that would win the game. The pace and flow felt like basketball, though defense was hardly more than an afterthought.

With these two games firmly in place, the pace and action will be down pat in our Frankenstein hoops game. Now all we need is personality and depth. EA's *Dr. J vs. Lorry Bird One-on-One* for a variety of systems (our choice was the Commodore 64) brought real people to the game, with on-screen skills that seemed to match their real-life counterparts. Realism was beginning to touch the titles, as was the graphic flair. (Anyone remember the excitement the first time they broke the backboard with Dr. J?) As for depth and presentation, it's hard to beat the latest incarnations of the *NBA Live* series, with ultra-realistic faces, appropriate hip-hop tunes, and all the league manager features a growing hoops fan needs.

HOCKEY

While hockey started out on the television screen as four *Pong* paddles and a square ball, it quickly evolved into a fast-paced video game suited for translation to console systems and PCs. So, let's start with Activision's *Ice Hockey* for the Atari 2600 (which introduced us to two-on-two play). Then we'll add *Hockey* and *Blades of Steel* for the NES, which had us yelling at our little brother for beating us. These three games provide the perfect foundation of action and thrill on which to build our puck-smashing masterpiece.

Now, all we need is a sprinkle of addictive quality and unmatched visuals to make our game like electronic crack. So we turn to EA Sports' *NHL '95* for the Sega Genesis, perhaps the height of sports gaming's most addictive series. You played it. And played it. And then played it some more. And it still wasn't enough. The game's stellar (for the time) graphics and perfectly balanced gameplay kept us coming back like a smackhead in Times Square. For a graphic

FANTASY FRAG

THE OLYMPICS

WHY WE HATE IT → Riddled with corruption among the organizers and drug abuse paranoia among the athletes, the Olympics is too big for its cleats. Added to that is the horribly U.S.-centric TV coverage. Ever since Americans discovered they could sell a few Nikes by commercializing the games, the spectacle of human physical achievement has been turned into a freak show. With such useless tripe as beach volleyball and ballroom dancing as events, the games have become a logistical nightmare. Curiously, none of the pathetic organization issues in Atlanta (like athletes with nowhere to stay or train) were reported by the media. Soon they'll have a medal for going down to the pub .

HOW IT SHOULD BE FRAGGED → Return the Olympics to the ideals of its modern-day creator Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Athletes were amateurs. They had day jobs. They strove to compete at the highest level for the glory of competition — not money. All pro athletes should be disqualified and replaced with talented amateurs. And, any IOC committee members found guilty of taking bribes (or $50,000 scholarship "gifts") and athletes found to be on drugs should be forced to sit through the synchronized swimming competition.

Every weekday on our website we frag whatever the fuck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because. It makes it. Find out what we frag'd today on www.pcxl.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BABES.

engine, we'll hire the folks who put together *NHL 2000*, certainly the most stunning graphics in a hockey game, and perhaps in any sports game, ever.

BASEBALL

Not many people have succeeded with a melange game that incorporates the best of both worlds — brilliant graphics and a statistical model robust enough to handle baseball's crushing numbers.

For starters, we have to throw in a little piece of one of the most primitive games — *Major League Baseball* for the Intellivision. At the time of its release, it was light years ahead of its blocky Atari 2600 competitor, and was one of the first games to fully implement a realistic control scheme that actually felt as if you were in command of the whole team. Then add in the first *Hardball* by Accolade, and Tengen's *RBI Baseball* for the NES. These were the titles that made us keep track of our own statistics, because the game wouldn't do it for us.

The best brains in baseball games (at least until recent statistical simulations) may have belonged to *Earl Weaver Baseball* for the Amiga. *Earl* dazzled with its graphics (which were wholly unimpressive on the IBM port) and flabbergasted us with its AI. Not only did it have a full suite of statistics tracking in every category imaginable, but it seemed to understand how a baseball season should flow. *Earl*'s players had personalities. They played and performed like you might expect if you had studied their season statistics. Of course, for the graphics and sound, we want today's state-of-the-art, which, despite its many gameplay problems, is EA's *Triple Play 2000* — the best looking game on the market right now.

SOCCER

If we played or watched soccer, we might care enough about it to make a new soccer game. Lucky for us (and for the editor trying to make this story fit in this space), we don't.

THE POWER METER

Let's get ready to RUM-bllllllle! Sports dominate this ish, and frankly, there are few competitors. Anyway, here they are.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	-	**ELECTRONIC ARTS** —> Undisputed king of the sports genre, EA Sports improves each annual update with just barely enough to have us recommend the damn things.
2	7	**MICROSOFT** —> *NFL Fever 2000* and *Inside Drive* are a sign of great things to come from the mighty Microsoft.
3	6	**HASBRO** —> While the rumored buyout of GT Interactive failed to materialize, they snagged Wizards of the Coast and with it *Magic: The Gathering* card game and *AD&D* licenses.
4	2	**ACTIVISION** —> Possibly the most consistently solid lineup, except for the insidious Headgames "Extreme" line of crap.
5	9	**WESTWOOD** —> *Tiberian Sun* appears in the top two slots of *PC Data*'s list only one week after release.
6	5	**EIDOS** —> It's a shame they produce so many lackluster games. But *Anachronox*, *Deus Ex*, *Omikron*, hell, even *Tomb Raider: Revelations* will score big.
7	4	**INTERPLAY** —> *Freespace 2* is ready and *Giants* looks fantastic, though its probable critical success may not translate into a hot commercial property. Same with *Messiah*, but they are getting their act together.
8	-	**BUNGIE** —> The Take Two publishing deal could give the developers more leverage for promising titles like *Oni* and *Halo*.
9	-	**FOX INTERACTIVE** —> While they've majorly flopped in the sports arena, some of their gaming titles show real potential.
10	8	**BLIZZARD** —> Blizzard still holds the cards with their plan for final *Diablo 2* code to be out this year. *WarCraft III* basically ensures their position on this chart ad infinitum.

OTHER CONTENDER

EPIC GAMES —> *Unreal Tournament* demo finally has people playing the game. Great potential, nitpicks, but Q3A has it sewn up in straight deathmatch.

NOWHERE IN SIGHT

APPLE —> A bunch of games are being ported to the platform, but until they design a good gaming keyboard and mouse, they're fighting a losing battle. Still, the G4 could turn speed demons' eyes misty.

THE GAMES THAT STARTED IT ALL

Older games can usually recall the specific moments in time when games became a way of life. We can recall a lot of those moments. (Okay, so we haven't had much of a life.) Here are the sports games that drive us addicted to virtual athletic action, even to this day.

PONG, HOCKEY, TENNIS, JAI-LAI
Approximate Year —> 1976-?
Why It Changed Our Lives —> It marked the first time our TV was good for something besides "Happy Days" and "The Brady Bunch"
Legacy —> The sad, pasty, skinned losers we've become

ATARI BASKETBALL
Approximate Year —> 1979
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Proved that "3D" was possible, even on the Atari 2600's bit of memory
Legacy —> Still makes us believe square basketballs are more fun

ACTIVISION BOXING
Approximate Year —> 1980
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Showed us that Activision would be around long enough to make really crappy sequels like *Pitfall 3D*
Legacy —> The only way we can watch boxing without getting dizzy is from the top-down angle.

ACTIVISION HOCKEY
Approximate Year —> 1980
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Definitively demonstrated to Atari programmers that actual gem play could be accomplished on the 2600
Legacy —> Sure, Atari programmers into fits of depression from which they never quite recovered

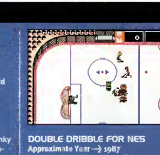
INTELLIVISION BASEBALL
Approximate Year —> 1981
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Made us believe that a gold disk and a keypad could be used to play a sports game.
Legacy —> We keep searching for the gold disk during games of *High Heat 2000*

COLECOVISION BASEBALL — SUPERACTION CONTROLLERS
Approximate Year —> 1982
Why It Changed Our Lives —> A big chunky controller with 18 buttons gave you complete command over your team
Legacy —> Innate ability to use Microsoft's 20-button Sidewinder

ONE-ON-ONE FOR C-64
Approximate Year —> 1984
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Personality is injected into games. Things have never been the same since
Legacy —> Now we're stuck with too much personality, including that nutty Ted Nugent hunting game

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL AMIGA
Approximate Year —> 1985
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Stats, stats, stats. If we had a bikini-clad babe for every statistics printout we did from this game, we certainly wouldn't be Dan Egger
Legacy —> Still can't find a baseball game we like this much

TECMO BOWL FOR NES
Approximate Year —> 1987
Why It Changed Our Lives —> The sheer enjoyment of busting the Bo Jackson 100-yard run money play on your friends remains unmatched to this day
Legacy —> Much like our good buddy Bo Jackson — not much



DOUBLE DRIBBLE FOR NES
Approximate Year —> 1987
Why It Changed Our Lives —> It was the first genuinely fun basketball game.
Legacy —> The continual wait for another game that gets us that riled up

TVSPORTS FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL FOR AMIGA
Approximate Year —> 1989-90
Why It Changed Our Lives —> At the time, some of the best graphics yet seen in sports games showed us the visual possibilities in sports titles
Legacy —> Europeans are probably still playing these on their sad, sad Amigas

NBA JAM
Approximate Year —> 1993
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Fast, in-your-face, and bigger than life action that made sports games more than strategy and tactics
Legacy —> All sports games now incorporate corporate-ized in-your-face attitude and the inexplicable code for big heads

MADDEN NFL '93 FOR GENESIS
Approximate Year —> 1992 (oddly enough)
Why It Changed Our Lives —> Showed us that ambulances coming out for injured players are really kinda funny. Plus, making hits after the whistle became a game within a game
Legacy —> With today's annoying attention for rules, we are constantly penalized for late hits in every football game we play — damn them!

SIERRA'S NFL FOOTBALL PRO 96
Approximate Year —> 1996
Why It Changed Our Lives —> One of the last truly great hybrids of graphics and statistics before the bottom fell out of Sierra Sports
Legacy —> The realization that *Extreme Bocce Ball!* will get more development dollars than any football game at Sierra

GAMESCAN HOTLIST

FINDING WAYS TO WASTE TIME ON THE INTERNET IS SECOND NATURE TO US BY NOW, SO WE FIGURED OUR FAITHFUL READERS COULD USE SOME HELP DOING THE SAME — IN A SPORTING KIND OF WAY. PCXL TAKES YOUR HAND AND LEADS YOU TO OUR FAVORITE CORNERS OF CYBERSPACE, HELPING READERS TRACK DOWN THE BEST SPORTING UTILITIES AROUND.

SPORT

PROGRAM → For those of you unfamiliar with that big yellow ball outside and the blue stuff around it, Sport will help you organize events like darts, soccer, tennis, and volleyball tournaments *outdoors*. Yes, that may mean actual sunlight on your blanched, white carcass

USEFULNESS → Fairly high, if you're actually going to take the plunge and step away from the computer (don't be scared!) or if you have enough friends to host a round-robin squash tournament

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → About three days, or as long as your last "workout" regimen lasted

COST → Free, but the demo version won't let you save your precious triple-elimination croquet tournaments to disk

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK SPORTS

PROGRAM → The sports version of the in-your-face online quiz game *You Don't Know Jack*, which entertains sports mavens with "hilarious combinations of pop culture and sports trivia"

USEFULNESS → Significant, if your idea of scintillating sports knowledge is guessing how many current NBA basketball players' names rhyme with "booger"

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → About as long as you can stomach another in-your-face program with a shouting emcee and a "wacky" bent

COST → Your immortal soul, for succumbing to one more game shoutcasting its "attitude" all over the place

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

SANTA BABES

What better gift could we give to you than pictures of three unnecessarily short Santa outfits worn by three necessarily beautiful women? It's merely our way of saying thanks for reading our mag this year. We could have easily just put some big words on the cover and shipped it — but instead we were forced to spend an entire afternoon in a cold studio obeying the whims of these lovely models. Teresa, Carolina, and Lindsay make up our triumvirate of Santa Babes and were good sports as well. Our feeble attempts to make a gaming connection in this section failed miserably, but with babelicious models like this, do you really care?

MISTLETOE MAVENS

Our three Santa Honeys aren't the only scantily clad dynamos that remind us of the wintery goodness that is Christmas. Our crack team of editors have compiled another trio of Christmas- and game-related celebrity hotties

CHRISSY SNOW

X-MAS TIE-IN → Real name on "Three's Company" was actually Christmas Snow
BETTER KNOWN AS → Suzanne Sommers, the "Thighmaster Ho"
GAME RELATION → Like games, her target audience is a bunch of out of shape couch potatoes

LAUREN HOLLY

X-MAS TIE-IN → As in "Boughs Of" Holly
BETTER KNOWN AS → Crazy cutie who dated Jim Carrey and appeared in *Perhcope Down*
GAME RELATION → Star of *The Mask*, which was also made into a craptacular Genesis game

JENNA ELFMAN

X-MAS TIE-IN → "Elf"man, as in pointy eared Santa helpers
BETTER KNOWN AS → TV airhead Dharma
GAME RELATION → Namesake Danny Elfman fronted Oingo Boingo, which is the noise *Q-bert* made when he jumped

The Heat-O-Meter

THE SPORTS ILLU-XTRA-TED EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

DREAMCAST --> Sega's new console system set sales records in the U.S. Buyers thought they were in line for Backstreet Boys tickets.

WHY 2K? --> As the millennium approaches, more and more people are asking themselves if their money is safe in the bank, wondering if it'll be safe to travel, and annoying the hell out of everyone by reminding those who don't give a rat's ass that the millennium doesn't really start until January 1, 2001.

REVEALING BITS --> Ion Storm's surgically-enhanced gorgeous blonde level designer, KillCreek, will be appearing in *Playboy*. Her turn-ons? 32-bit color and long hair. Turn-offs? Campers and Todd Porter. Release date? When it's done.

HASBRO GOES UP +2 --> Hasbro bought Wizards of the Coast, owners of the *Magic: The Gathering* and *AD&D* franchises, for over $325 million. Maybe that's why frogs and centipedes have been added as character classes in the third edition of *AD&D*. Look for *Mono Tycoon* to be released sometime in Fall 2000.

WHAT'S COLD

X-BOX --> Rumors say that Microsoft will release its own console game system. Bill Gates got the idea when he found out his kid wanted something for Christmas that didn't have his company's logo on it.

"TAH TAH" TO TA-TAS --> Core is refuting reports that Lara Croft has received a breast reduction for *Tomb Raider: Revelations*. Of course not ... It was that Jennifer Lopez-sized ass of hers that got liposuctioned.

SLACK-JAWED MOGULS --> Sony has acquired the movie rights to *Redneck Rompoge*, winner of our prestigious "Best Waste Of A CD-ROM" award. Unlike other sure-fire hit game-to-movies like *Super Mario Brothers* and *Double Dragon*, this one is a *real* sure-fire hit. (Just play along and back away slowly.)

SHAKE 'N' BREAK --> The Taiwan earthquake has damaged technology manufacturing plants located there, diminishing supplies, raising prices, and panicking investors. It's a good thing something like that could never happen in good ol' stable Silicon Valley.

VOODOO4 --> 3Dfx says their new 3D accelerator will be delayed until Spring 2000. The good news is that the Voodoo5 is still on track for a December '99 release.

GAME KILLER

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

Associate Editors are immortals, a unique breed of editor who can die only by decapitation, fated to duel down the ages to a mysterious distant time called "The Gathering," when the last few will battle for The Prize. When two Associate Editors are at the same magazine, they must duel to the bloody horrible death. So it was when Mike Morrissey arrived at **PCXL**.

Sensing the presence of another immortal, Associate Editor Ed Lee immediately began plotting his death. But instead of fighting honorably, Ed sprung an ambush. While Mike was walking towards his car in the Imagine Media parking lot, Ed yelled out the ancient challenge: "Glock Glock motherf—ker!" As Ed charged, Mike desperately looked for anything to defend himself from the fatal strike. The only thing nearby was a copy of *Prince of Persia 3D*. "No one will miss it anyway," he thought.

That would be the last thought to cross through Mike's confused mind, as the blade thrust through the craptacular game into his chest. "You ... bastard ..." he croaked. "There can be only one," Ed cackled.

Unbeknownst to Ed, Assistant Editor Chuck Osborn witnessed the cowardly scene. He looks forward to the day when he is granted the title of Associate Editor and can finally avenge Mike's death. Stay tuned ...

We're really not sure if Mike was protecting himself, or keeping his distance from *POP3D*.

GAMESCAN

NFL SCHEDULER FOR PALM PILOTS

PROGRAM --> Keep track of your favorite team's season schedule with this handy program that adds the times and days of every game for whichever teams you choose. Unfortunately, the demo version only includes the schedule of the Washington Redskins. Woo hoo

USEFULNESS --> Huge, especially since you'll finally be able to push unimportant appointments -- like visiting your homebound mother and remembering your two-year marriage anniversary -- out of the Palm Pilot's memory for more important things, like football

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY --> Until we've reached the inevitable tedium and boredom that will be the 2000 baseball season

COST --> Unless you're a Redskins fan, the program costs $9.95 to register. In other words, everyone will be paying $9.95

PATCH FOR FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO 98

PROGRAM --> A bug patch that fixes several problems with the last decent Sierra football game, including troubles with multiplayer gaming, crashes when players used the Isolation camera, an ALT key bug, and long CD access times

USEFULNESS --> Because no patch in the world could fix *Football Pro '99*, the importance of this patch is huge, allowing gamers to remember the glory that once was Sierra football games, and to reflect on the WB sitcom-like manure pile *Sierra Football Pro* has now become

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY --> As long as you care to carry the painful memories of what Sierra has done to *Front Page Sports: Football Pro*, once the best football game going

COST --> Free, if you don't count the horrendous pain

UNINSTALLER FOR SIERRA SPORTS FOOTBALL '99

PROGRAM → Going hand-in-hand with the '98 patch, this critical program helps you to clean your poor, helpless, undeserving computer of all vestiges of one of the worst commercial sports games ever shoveled onto an unsuspecting public: *Sierra Sports Football '99*

USEFULNESS → We wouldn't normally be so fervent in any of our recommendations (it would require way too much energy), but this is an absolute necessity for any non-masochistic sports game player

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → You'll definitely want to keep this one installed, just in case. Just as Stephen King once wrote, "Sometimes, they come back"

COST → Whatever you paid for this piece of shit in the first place

FRONT OFFICE FOOTBALL

PROGRAM → Created by a one-man programming team and swallowed up by EA, *Front Office Football* lets you play football GM. Wheel, deal, and scheme to get your team to the Super Bowl

USEFULNESS → If you've played an early version of this stats-based game that lets you do everything from setting ticket prices to negotiating contracts, then you know how good it is at recreating the job of a GM. Just don't expect much in the graphics department. It doesn't really have any

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → Until we can take the virtual Philadelphia Eagles to the Super Bowl — or the year 2035. Okay, maybe 2045.

COST → Only available online, the game costs $19.95, well worth it, if you ask us. But you didn't, did you?

The Virtual Athlete:

Secret Quake Training Regimen Revealed!

What does it take to be a real *Quake* competitor? We decided to find out as we go behind the scenes at PCXL's very own Fantasy *Quake* Training Camp.

1 DESK HURDLES

"Training is crucial to being a great *Quake* athlete," says **PCXL** coach Mike "Danger" Salmon. "That's why every member of the team wakes up at the crack of 9:00 AM and gets to work. Getting to their desk alone requires hurdling over piles of ass games, empty pizza boxes, trash cans, and whatever other crap is on the floor. Some people think we're slobs, which we are, but we use that to be better virtual athletes."

2 THE SHOTGUN RUN

"Ain't nothing gets the blood pumping harder than the *Shotgun Run*," boasts Eric "Boba Fuct" Smith. "After a mandatory 30-minute where-do-we-eat-lunch-today-that's-not-the-same-as-yesterday question and answer session and the *Dart Challenge*, all competitors make a dash towards the door to be the first one outside to yell "shotgun," making sure they get to sit in the front passenger seat. The losers participate in the "Not Bitch" (middle seat) Relay, where they jockey for position in the back seat." The competition becomes more heated when people from other more serious offices (Read: "with real jobs") are pushed, kicked, knocked over, or generally annoyed by **PCXL** staffers geekily running out the door like junior high schoolers hopped up on Sweet Tarts.

3 CALLOUS-THENICS

"My daily regimen starts with a few mouse exercises," advises Chuck "DeadMeat" Osborn. "You've really gotta feel like you're one with the mouse. I start out by moving it around and clicking a lot, maybe playing a practice two-hour game of *Quake* or trolling for porn. Sure, I'm supposed to be 'writing,' but nobody ever got anywhere in this business by doing that. Sometimes I talk to my mouse. And caress it. And maybe, just maybe, give it sweet lovin.' This is off the record, right?"

4 DODGE THE MANAGING EDITOR

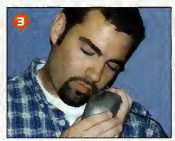
"We all try to get in some early morning ... err ... midday ... okay, all day exercise playing a game of *Dodge Philip*, explains Ed "Glock-Glock" Lee. "Playing is simple. Philip, our managing editor, seeks out unfinished work and we hide from him because we haven't done it. During deadline week, it can give you a real cardiovascular workout."

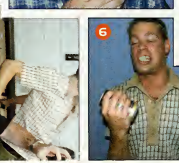
5 DART CHALLENGE

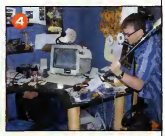
"Good aim is essential to playing *Quake*," asserts Rob "Blade" Smith. "That's why the driver of the lunch wagon is chosen by a friendly game of darts. Loser drives. My years of experience hanging around pubs gives me a leg up on the competition."

6 OLYMPAHOLICS

"Strength training is an important part of our workout," confides Kyle "Adderall" LeBouef. "Healthy, toned muscles need lots of repetitions. That's why we end every day doing Beer Curls. It's easy: Get a beer, lift it to your mouth, drink, put it down, repeat. They're so much fun that you might have trouble stopping, but at least you're making a real commitment to the game."







PCXL ACTION FIGURES

THE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Tired of not knowing what your kids *really* want for Christmas? Forget the guesswork and imagine their happy faces when they unwrap their very own PCXL staffer — literally! Now only $49.99 while supplies last!

Jammin' Mike Salmon
With Super-Action Tongue™

Talking Rob Smith
Says Hilarious British Phrases

Ed "Slash" Lee
With Kung-Fu Grip

Talking Philip Mayard
Defender Of Deadlines

Poseable Gia DeCarlo
Completely Bendable!

Fashion Victim™ Chuck Osborn
Make Him Over ... Quickly!

Kyle LeBoeuf
With Five Different Hair Dyes

Eric Smith
Complete With Babe Photos

EXCLUSIVE!

Buy the whole set for just $19.95* and get a *FREE* **Mike Morrissey** figure

*Plus Shipping & Handling

Be sure to complete your collection with this line of PCXL X-Editors.

(Watch out! It's hard to keep 'em once you have 'em.)

Dan Egger

Carrie Shephard

Q!

E3 Booth Babe

Mirna Blankenstein-whateverhernameis

GAMESCAN

THE EDGE

PROGRAM → Also made by EA Sports, *The Edge* helps fantasy football freaks boil mountains of statistics down to a manageable level, and even helps you choose your own starting lineups each week based on stats like defensive opponents strength, players' health, weather, and other factors

USEFULNESS → This depends on exactly how much money you've sunk into your fantasy league (the one you told the cops was "just for laughs"). If you've put in over $100, use everything you can to win, including this little utility

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → Until you've either won your money back, or you lose everything and have to tell your significant other some lie about carjackers at the Taco Bell drive-thru who took your wallet and John Tesh CDs

COST → $19.95, and the ridicule of your woman for paying even more money for "make-believe football," as she calls it

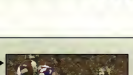
SPORTS BABE SCREEN SAUER

PROGRAM → We think this program name speaks for itself

USEFULNESS → A rotating screen saver that pops up pictures of athletic-looking women in revealing swimsuits and other, ahem, attire. The program offers a full suite of controls, including sliders to adjust the speed, special effects, and other options. Slightly more provocative than that nerdy *Quake* screensaver you've been using

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → Until your girlfriend/wife sees it

COST → Free to try, $14.95 to keep the 10-image version, slightly more for the $2-babe option



NFL FORECASTER

PROGRAM → Forecast the winners, losers, and point spreads of NFL games. All you have to do is enter the scores from the previous week's games. Print out reports based on stats, schedules, or predictions, or print out your arrest record after the cops raid your bookie. Either way, this is a hefty download of gambling goodness on which to waste that trust fund

USEFULNESS → If you're a gambling junkie, this program won't be of much use. You probably already have a fool-proof system in place for picking games (and a Gold Card for the Flamingo Tahoe), which is why you only lost $11,000 betting on NFL games last year

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → Until the repo man comes to take your computer away

COST → Free to try, $25 to keep, $350 registration fee for Gamblers Anonymous (at this point the guys at the Flamingo might stop calling you)

NBA INSIDE DRIVE PATCH 1.2

PROGRAM → This mythical patch, which we're sure Microsoft will issue at some point if they want to insert defense into the game, thus limiting teams to less than 200 points in a single contest. It also attempts to fix the general "not fun" bug

USEFULNESS → Incredibly useful, especially if you're a cheap bastard still complaining about the $20 you plunked down for this greatly lacking "first attempt"

AVERAGE HARD DRIVE STAY → Long enough to patch the game, realize it's not as much fun as *NBA Live 2000*

COST → Nothing, if you can ever find the damn patch on Microsoft's hedge maze of a website

PCXL P.I.

YOU GOT QUESTIONS? WE GET ANSWERS

YET AGAIN, WE TACKLE THE STUPID QUESTIONS YOU DON'T HAVE THE GUTS TO ASK.

INTERPLAY TECH SUPPORT

PCXL (trying to sound like a 12-year-old) → Umm ... hi, I'm having problems playing *Kingpin*.

INTERPLAY → What problem are you having?

PCXL → Well ... umm ... can you tell me what a motherf—ker is?

INTERPLAY (very uncomfortable) → Uhh ... no, I don't think ... what does that have to do with you trying to play *Kingpin*?

PCXL → They say it a lot in *Kingpin*, but I don't know what it means so I'm not sure if it's important.

INTERPLAY → No ... that's not, umm ... that's not important. I can't tell you what it means.

PCXL → How about c—ksucker? Does that mean the same thing?

INTERPLAY → No, that's completely different.

PCXL → Oh. Well, how about "Bust a cap in yo head, skanky bitch-ass ho"?

INTERPLAY → Sir, do you have any technical questions?

PCXL (whiny) → But I'm not sure if I can play the game if I don't know this stuff!

INTERPLAY → It's just general profanity ... like bad words. You don't need to know them to play.

PCXL → All right! Peace out, mother f—ker!

REAL DOLL

REAL DOLL → Abyss Creations, how may I help you?

PCXL → Hi, do you guys make Real Doll, the anatomically correct female sex toy?

REAL DOLL → Umm ... yes. Would you like to make an order?

PCXL → *PC Accelerator* magazine is doing a gift guide for the December issue and we'd like to know if we could get a ... uh ... review unit.

REAL DOLL → No, sir, we definitely don't do that.

PCXL → Well, how about if we send it back once we're done?

REAL DOLL → That's really not possible, sir.

PCXL → I thought you guys sent one to Howard Stern. We're like Howard Stern.

REAL DOLL → That was a gift.

PCXL → Did he send it back?

REAL DOLL → No, he was very ... umm ... satisfied. At least he seemed to be.

PCXL → But you don't know for sure? Look, we've got a group of eight guys here. Send us one and each one of us can test out the unit and give an honest appraisal in our magazine. We'll even clean it before returning it to you.

REAL DOLL → I'm hanging up.

MUSIC TO QUAKE BY

NOW WE'RE TELLING YOU WHAT MUSIC TO BUY

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME ... BUT IN OUR INFINITE WISDOM AND QUEST TO GIVE YOU THE READERS WHAT WE THINK YOU WANT, WE'RE STARTING UP A SMALL LITTLE MUSIC REVIEW SECTION. HOPE YOU LIKE IT, IF NOT, UP YOURS.

OL' DIRTY BASTARD
NIGGA PLEASE
(Elektra Entertainment)

On *Nigga Please* (and chill out already — that's the name of the album), ODB (aka Big Baby Jesus) is at his unhinged, Rick James-aping, mouth-breathing best. He's got more energy and creativity than any other Wu-Tanger, and it shows here. This is easily one of the best hip-hop albums of the year. Actually, the tracks in which Dirty attempts to get all in your face and scary don't work. But it's got all the right stuff (crystallized in the first single, "Got Yo Money") — killer hooks, elastic basslines, great rhymes, a gratuitous Chris Rock cameo, and, uh, what else do you need? — *Ed*

CHRIS GAINES
GREATEST HITS
(Capitol Records)

Not to miss an opportunity to get into the spotlight, Garth "I'd rather be playing baseball" Brooks has followed the Ol' Dirty Bastard's lead and created a new persona of his own. Enter the fictious rocker "Chris Gaines." The only problem is that his attempt is filled with more ass than Jennifer Lopez' hot pants. Maybe he should have used the name "Little Baby Soul-Patch" and started stealing Wranglers from his local Wal-Mart. Either way, this CD is a beer coaster waiting to happen and even then, you'll want to place it face down so your beer won't lose it's head. — *Eric*

THE PCXL INTERVIEW — BRUCE CAMPBELL

RECENTLY, WE SAT DOWN (WELL, PESTERED) BRUCE CAMPBELL, THE STAR OF "XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS" AND THE *EVIL DEAD* SERIES, ABOUT HIS NEWEST PROJECT, *TACHYON: THE FRINGE* ... NOT TO MENTION *EVIL DEAD 4* AND HOT LESBO ACTION.

PCXL ⇢ How long have you been working on *Tachyon*? How difficult is the work?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ I wish I could tell you a horrible sob story, but it's been a very pleasant experience. We'll do a total of four grueling days. The funny thing about doing this sort of work is that you have to record two to three times the material that you would normally need. When I first did one and they brought the script in, I about fell on the floor. I said, "I have to say all these words?"

PCXL ⇢ Because we're trying to flatter you, what do you bring to the game that a less talented actor might not?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ I'm sort of a sarcastic guy, and there's a pretty good match of personalities with the main character. That's the trick of a main character. You've got to make them as fun as the bad guy.

PCXL ⇢ Being a games mag and all, we are obligated to ask you the obligatory question. Do you play games much on your own?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ My son, Andy, plays them. I did *Pitfall 3D*, and [he] would report on whether it was good or bad. He's more impressed with that than any movie I've done because he can interact and hear his stupid Dad making wisecracks while he plays the game. Like if he's pissed off at me, he can just have my character jump off a cliff.

Ah, what better place to be than smack in the middle of a medieval, fantasy, lipstick-lesbian-chicks-in-leather sandwich!

PCXL ⇢ Any feelings you'd like to share about the lines in *Duke Nukem* being lifted straight from some of your movies?

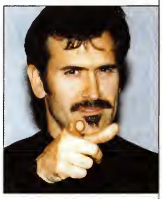
BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ All I can say is that if I ever meet the writer in a dark alley, he had better watch his back. And I'll leave him with this: Sleep with one eye open. I'm actually a little pissed off, because two things could have happened: They could have either written original material, which I guess is asking too much, or they could have hired me. And they didn't do either one.

PCXL ⇢ What's your next project after *Tachyon*?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ I'm doing a new TV show called "Jack of All Trades." It's an action comedy that will partially take the place of the "Hercules" time slot. And look for a book in Spring of 2000 from St. Martin's Press, called "Confessions of a B-movie Actor." It's sort of an anti-memoir. You know how when Charlton Heston writes a book, all he talks about is famous people? In my book, I don't talk about any famous people. It's really like a working stiff's version of Hollywood.

PCXL ⇢ Is there any chance of an *Evil Deod 4*?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ The economics didn't work out for *Army of Dorkness* too well. In the after market, the movie actually made money, but what you'll find is that there's no studio executive who wakes up thinking about stuff like that. They think, "That movie didn't do too well." But they don't realize that it shipped hundreds of thousands of video units. Now, I get clogged with e-mail: "Where's *Evil Deod 4*?" Right now, we're working on the ultimate *Army of Dorkness* on DVD, so it's coming. Let's just consider that part four.



Duke Nukem's writer had better start watchin' his ass ...

PCXL ⇢ On "Xena," are Gabrielle and Xena an actual item?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ You mean, are they hot and heavy? They would kill me if I told you. All I am allowed to say is, when they go to a fish restaurant, they order oysters and clams. How's that for a cryptic answer?

PCXL ⇢ Do you have a message for "the kids"?

BRUCE CAMPBELL ⇢ Buy the stinking game, or I'm going to hunt you down like dogs. No, I joke around a lot, but I do hope this is a really cool game. It looks like something I've never seen before. I'm hoping that "the kids" won't think it sucks.

GO FIGURE

Number of game reviewing editors at PCXL: 5

Number of copies of *Recoil* sent to PCXL: 90

Number of copies per person: 18

Percentage of PCXL editors who liked *Recoil*: 20%

Percentage of PCXL editors who liked *Shadow Man*: 20%

Number of games *PC Gamer* can beat PCXL in on a regular basis: 1

Number of games *PC Gamer* says they can beat PCXL in but then go on to lose and look like twits: Infinity minus 1

Number of allied *PC Gamer* editors single-handedly defeated by Ed in a multiplayer game of *Homeworld*: 3

NOTABLE OFFICE QUOTES

"CAN'T YOU GUYS JUST LEAVE US ALONE?"
— A Mindscape rep to a PCXL editor regarding Myst

"HEY, COME OVER HERE AND FEEL THIS"
— Chuck Osborn while checking out the new Logitech Wingman force feedback mouse and Vivid DVD Porn

"I'M TAKING *THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST BLACK MAN*"
— Dan Egger talking about his Vivid Video choice

"CAN I HAVE THE PHONE NUMBER FOR GOD?"
— Mike Salmon to telephone information operator

"I'M GONNA BE COMING IN LATE TODAY..."
— Ed Lee telling us he wouldn't make it in by ... daylight

THE SIGNS SAY ...

THIS MONTH'S SIGN THE APOCALYPSE IS UPON US:

***Myst* was re-rereleased this month in a stunning new "Masterpiece Edition" which promises "new features."**

No word if developers updated their version of Hypercard to produce the new 24-bit color static backgrounds.

DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

Hidden Evil lurks at Presto Studios

San Diego might seem like a strange place to run a design studio. It's a Navy town, with lots of sunlight, outdoor attractions, great beaches, pretty and vapid women wearing little clothing, and a state university best known for topping *Playboy*'s list of leading party campus' in the United States — several years in a row. Granted, the **PCXL** staff finds such civic attributes most appealing, but how many game designers do you know that walk away from the pulse of their computer monitors in daylight? And how many others would know what to do with a vapid she-vixen in a string bikini on a sunny beach? Well, the lot at Presto Studios aren't your average assemblage of designers.

Presto is one of the elder statesmen of game studios, formed in July of '92 by Michel Kripalani, Dave Flanagan, Farshid Almassizadeh, Jose Albanil, Greg Uhler, Jack Davis, and Geno Andrews. Mostly friends from San Diego, just out of college and intense science fiction fans, Presto Studio's founding crew came together to take advantage of the still-young CD-ROM medium to make an ambitious time travel adventure. *The Journeyman Project* was actually started in 1991 after the guys quit their day jobs, and threw everything into the game. Two years later, Presto had the game finished and ready to show at MacWorld in January 1993.

The Journeyman Project put Presto on the map, and six years later, the crew has grown and put out two sequels: *Buried In Time* and *Legacy of Time*. In between both sequels, Presto also completed *Gundam 0079*, based on the Japanese movie and television series. Considering the level of merger upheaval that has touched the rest of the development community, it's gratifying to know that Kripalani, Flanagan, Almassizadeh, Albanil, and Uhler are all still an active part of Presto. Something else that hasn't changed — sci-fi still rocks their world.

Having just snared the entire Star Trek license, Activision chose Presto to design an adventure game based on the situations established in the *Star Trek: Insurrection* movie, but with an entirely original story. Titled *Star Trek: Hidden Evil*, the game is scheduled for a holiday release. Unlike the traditional adventure developer, Presto believes in tight mission structure to help unfold interesting stories. *Hidden Evil* is no exception. Even in the alpha version of *Hidden Evil* shown to **PCXL**, the game is already exhibiting excellent action elements. There is ample opportunity for combat, and controlling Sovok in a phaser fight is a fairly nimble affair. Another attribute of the game is how quickly scenes and locations are loaded, with very little delay. Presto is using a whole new 3D engine it calls Sprint to deliver these features.

We can see one very good reason to work at Presto Studios, and it's not the lax dress code.

This is either the office building that houses Presto Studios, or the oldest, least popular attraction at EPCOT.

Producer Tim Tembreull says Trek fans will find plenty of references to tidbits from the TV series — everything from comments about poker games to secondary-character voiceovers from actors that appeared in TNG episodes. Tembreull revealed that the team even wanted to render Data's cat, but didn't have the time to work the feline into the game.

Despite the pressure of having to get *Hidden Evil* out in less than a year, the team hasn't let the burden stop them from having fun. Presto has its own *Team Fortress Classic* clan, which often hosts competitions on its servers. And there are still a number of staffers who play *Everquest*, as well. But if executive assistant Kathleen McMahon is any indication of San Diego charm, too bad they couldn't make it to the beach. ➤

***— GEORGE T. CHRONIS** used to work with Rob Smith at that "other" game pub, and is blackmailing him for assignments with the only known photograph of the **PCXL** executive editor wearing the dainty pink bathrobe and equally pink slippers stolen from the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in '97*

STATUS

TITLES IN THE WORKS ---> *Star Trek: Hidden Evil, Stephen King Desktop Themes*, and a super-secret project yet to be announced

BEERS IN THE FRIDGE ---> Zero

BOTTLES IN THE WINE CELLAR ---> Only enough for them— not media whores

NUMBER OF DECENT RESTAURANTS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE ---> Zero

LOVELY EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT'S LEAST FAVORITE GAME PUB ---> PCXL

FAVORITE DEITY ---> The Claw

MOST CONSPICUOUS TOY FRANCHISE ON DISPLAY ---> Star Wars

CHOICE FOR AFTER-HOURS FRAGGING ---> Team Fortress Classic

OFFICES MOST RESEMBLE ---> A neat and tidy Federation star base

CHOICE FOR ON-THE-CLOCK FRAGGING ---> Team Fortress Classic

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AWARE OF SECRET BACK ENTRANCE ---> 1

FEEDBACK

letters@pcxl.com

→ Sometimes our normally videogame-addled, pasty-skinned, small bus-riding readers surprise us. They are quick about one thing: Pointing out our flaws. And believe it or not, we actually like it. We're kinda kinky that way. And you sometimes give us props (or as Ed and "da kidz" call them, "Mad Fat Props"). And we like that, too. So as Spike Lee once said, "Get Off the Bus" (or something like that) and send in your rants and raves to letters@pcxl.com.

FICKLE FANS

What if you all suddenly dropped dead? What would we, your loyal readers, do?

Rich Cree

Try to steal our jobs, no doubt. Just remember, Rich — we know where you live.

Dear *PC Accelerator*,

I thought that all you "overworked and underpaid editors" might be interested in hearing what happened to me in detention hall today. They require us to do something while we're in there, so naturally I was reading my *PC Accelerator*.

As I had read that issue many times before (the September issue), I was just browsing through the chick pics. While doing this, a few people around me noticed them and started laughing hysterically. Needless to say, we all got more detentions. I guess it just goes to show that your magazine has endless entertainment possibilities!

Your disgruntled reader,
Roger Garland

Roger, you can get out of detention by giving this to your teacher.

Dear (fill in the blank) _____'s teacher,

Please excuse _____ from detention. He was stricken by a rare disease called "Monkeyspank Pervertitus" that requires him to look at pictures of half-naked women. Copies of *PC Accelerator* should be kept on hand at all times in case of future outbreaks.

Thank you,

_____'s Mom

ANACHRO-NOT

I just noticed on your contents page in October's issue that ... well ... that's not really *Anochronox* is that?

Anonymous

No, that's a picture of Lara Croft's butt. For being the only reader to catch our boo-boo, you win a fabulous all-expense paid trip to ... oh, wait ... you're anonymous. You don't get anything.

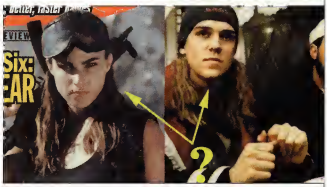
MY MOM CAN LICK MY MOM

I just made a pukeliciously craptastic observation that I'm sure you'll pay money to know about. In your "Flying High" review of flight sims (Oct '99), one of the controllers you rated, the Interact Cyclone 3D, looks just like the toy my mom bought her life mate for their anniversary.

Askis Ethridge

Answer choices:

1) Know about? We'd pay good money to watch them review it.
2) Well, we knew the Cyclone 3D had to be good for *something*.
3) Now *that's* what we call Force Feedback!



Separated at birth?

SILENT BUT DEADLY

I'm afraid I've noticed something disturbing about the cover girl of the October issue of your magazine. As strange as it may sound, I believe she bears a striking resemblance to Jason Mewes of "Jay and Silent Bob" fame. Mad am I? Check it out for yourself!

Loyal Reader,
Ross

Umm ... thanks, Ross. We'll never be able to look at that cover the same way again.

MAG LAG

I have heard of lag in games, and it truly sux. But lately your magazine has been suffering from Magazine Lag. Why isn't it possible for you to review hardware advertised in your magazine at or near the same time you begin to advertise it? Most of the advertisements state claims about the products, so one would think the products are made already.

Daniel Homa

Daniel,

Prototypes may exist, but marketing usually begins long before a product is ready to ship to consumers. Remember, we're not advertising the product, Faceless Corporation is. And unless they send us a review unit in advance, we won't see it until you do. On top of that, monthly magazines have a lead time of about 2-3 months, meaning that hardware featured in this December issue was actually reviewed in October.

DRAFT BORED

This isn't a rant, so much as it is an explanation of some questions brought up in the October PCXL's *Rogue Spear* review.

One point is the thought that the sniper's sitting position is for no reason. The reason is quite simple, when you think about firing mechanics. The ideal is the "prone" position, which is essentially lying down, elbows resting on the ground, forming a bipod for the rifle to rest on. In real-world scenarios though, lying down isn't always possible (tall grass, etc). The next best thing is to sit legs crossed, elbows on your knees, forming the bipod this way.

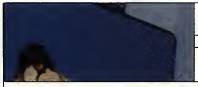
Point two is the issue of the silencer on the sniper's rifle. A silencer works by affecting the way and speed a bullet travels. I won't go into great deals of specifics here, but all you have to know is that it slows the bullet down, and may throw off the trajectory somewhat.

Hope I could help you understand some points you brought up. Stick to games, though, and not combat.

Corporal Newman
Canadian Army

PCXL,

On page 28 (Oct. '99) you have that hottie Kristin holding a pistol whose slide is coming off. Somehow she has begun to disassemble the pistol and you printed that pic! Guys, if you're so ignorant about such basic



letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

things, how will you ever be study enough to get the danger-babes? Then again, maybe I shouldn't tell you why the sniper sits down instead of crouching. As long as you are the competition, it will be that much easier for me to score.

Respectfully,
SGT John Hammill
Fort Bragg, NC

Thanks for the tips, guys. It's not every day we get told off by both the Canadian and U.S. armies.

HAIRY QUESTION

I was wondering why almost all you geeky editors have goatees?

Mike

Because we'd be even bigger geeks without 'em. Check out this comparison and see for yourself ...

Anybody here heard of some guy named Brian? No? Sorry, man – can't help you out.

FLAT BUSTED!

Hey guys, I have proof that PCXL can withstand anything! One night I was reading the latest PCXL when my mom busted in the room! She was pissed at me for staying up so late reading it, because it was a school day and all. She threw it on the floor and then picked it up again and threw it down the stairs. (Of course you can imagine my dismay). But when I went to pick it up, nothing was ripped and it was still perfectly intact! Oh well, I say if PCXL can withstand my mom's rage, it's one tough magazine.

Zoglog

Tell that to the Canadian Army.

Doesn't this look just like a really f—ked-up episode of "The Brady Bunch"?

THAT'S B-E-E-R

I saw the "free beer contest" and in an effort to win I went one step further. I made an attempt to send a half-pound of weed to you, but encountered a few problems. Anyway, since I had good intentions I thought maybe you could help me out and send a good lawyer and $15,000 to the Campbell Co. Detention Center.

Brian

PCXL VS PC GAMER

A friend of mine and I have been having somewhat of a friendly rivalry for the past few months. The nature: Which is the better PC gaming magazine? *PC Accelerator* or *PC Gamer*? Naturally, I have always sided with the boys at PCXL. His argument: *PC Gamer* delivers the best possible game reviews, up-to-date gaming news and interesting features, all written in an elegant prose befitting an audience of young adult gamers. My argument: PCXL Rocks, *PC Gamer* sucks. His response: Does not! My response: Shut up before I take that lame mag, turn it sideways, and stick it straight up your CANDY ASS!!!!

One day he shows with a smug grin and the October issue of *PC Gamer*. He opens it up and forces me to read a small article. The article states that in no uncertain terms that glory boy and PCXL top dog Mike Salmon lost most heinously in a Jack in the Box Ultimate Cheeseburger eating contest to William Harms, the *PC Gamer* editor. I rubbed my eyes, but alas, those blasphemous words were still there. Say it isn't so. How could those losers across the hall possibly beat any of you? In a manly grease-eating contest to boot? You should all be ashamed of yourselves.

Mageling

Hello, while looking at a *PC Gamer* recently (I don't know what I had been smoking), I noticed that they keep saying things like they had knocked the @5%# out of you at Team Fortress and other games. Then I thought, well, let's see the lineup for the two magazines. PCXL: Mike Salmon, Ed Lee, Mike Morrissey, Rob Smith, and Chuck Osborn. *PCG*: Some fat guy who claims to be able to eat four Ultimate Cheeseburgers (That's just plain sick!), an idiot who's sunk so low he plays *Pokemon Pinball* on the Gameboy. What the hell? Clearly PCXL dominates the two. (If I had included Gia there actually would have been no need for any lineup.)

Dan Bassi

Okay, we admit it — when it comes to being fat-asses, the *PC Gamer* staff can't be beat. They're the original "Fatties With Guns." As for *Team Fortress*, they forgot to mention our dominance in *Rainbow Six*, *Homeworld*, *Re-Volt*, and any other game they run out on once they start losing.

B5 BACKLASH

... Sierra has taken the approach of just quitting a project when it was greatly anticipated throughout the fan and gaming community alike. If this is their attitude toward customers then they will always be a second rate company with as much foresight as a blinded Mongoloid.

William Edward Radcliffe Yates
proprietor of "Melt Down"

... I was eagerly anticipating the arrival of Sierra *B5* Flight Simulator, *Into the Fire*, and was distraught to learn that it was canceled. I personally know of at least two other people who definitely would've bought it in addition to myself.

Matt Plonski

... The choice of dropping the *B5* sim from their core games division is a bad business decision in my opinion. Maybe Sierra, instead of listening to marketing hype, should consult computer gamers on what they will buy and play.

Kent Logsdon

... I write this letter as a simple appeal to anyone who might be interested in picking up the unfinished product and completing it. *Babylon 5* has a great story, a great universe, and great ships — and it also has a great following.

Robert Williams

You're not kidding, Robert. These are a few of the many letters we received concerning the cancellation of *Babylon Five*. But, here's the thing ... we didn't cancel it! Go bug Sierra, willya? Geezel

Just like 80% of the UPN fall line-up: Cancelled.

Gaming 411

These sponsors make it possible for **PC ACCELERATOR** to exist. Without them we'd just be a bunch of loud-mouthed fools. We appreciate their advertising, but if they make a game that sucks, we WILL kill it. Nobody owns **PCXL**, but **PCXL**.

Follow these three easy steps to get all the product information you desire!

1. **Go to: http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411**
2. **Select the product category from a complete list. Search by name, or select the vendor's number from the list below for up-to-date info on your favorite games.**
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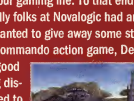
WIN BLOODY GREAT STUFF

In the PCXL/Delta Force 2 Sweepstakes

We at PCXL are always finding new ways to make you, our special readers, even more content in your gaming life. To that end, the scarily friendly folks at Novalogic had an idea. They wanted to give away some stuff pertaining to their new first-person commando action game, Delta Force 2. Well, the first game was a good one, the second promises more long distance sniping, and they were prepared to get great prizes from a variety of people to make you ecstatically happy.



Three grand prize winners extolling the luck normally reserved for the likes of Lyle Lovett (Julia Roberts), Michael Douglas (Catherine Zeta-Jones ... someone explain that one to me, please) and any American golfer will receive a Chase Durer UDT Special Forces watch. This thing will keep ticking when you're drowned in 330 feet of water or had your wrist run over by a truck. It'll even save your life if a bullet were to hit it (well, perhaps not). Whatever the case, it's going to impress the hell out of your buddies.

In typical fashion, that's not all. All ten prize winners (including the three grand prize recipients) will impress their friends with:

- Guillemot Nvidia GeForce 256 graphics cards
- Labtec LCX 2514 4-speaker and subwoofer surround sound system
- Labtec LVA 8550 microphone headset
- Diamond/S3 MX400 4-channel full duplex 3D sound card
- Razer Boomslang gaming mouse
- Brady Games Delta Force 2 strategy guide

Everyone will be playing their copies of Delta Force 2 in fine, fine style.

So, celebrate the release of Delta Force 2 with PCXL and Novalogic and fill out the little form at the bottom (legibly please), mail it in to us, and wait with baited breath as lady luck nods in the direction of those 10 lucky winners.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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Tear out this form, fill out all the necessary information - that means all the necessary information - and mail it to:

PC Accelerator
Delta Force 2 makes me giddy
150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005

If you don't want to rip up the mag, a 3x5 card with the pertinent info will also suffice. And don't enter more than once or we'll unleash some special forces on your ass. And we're the final judges (I could do with one of those watches, myself), and don't enter if you work for one of the sponsoring companies. Or you're related to one. Or met one in a bar and thought they were geeks. Etc.

No purchase is necessary to win. Entries must be received no later than December 31, 1999. The the winner will be chosen on or about January 7, 2000 and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. Imagine cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries. The prize is nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Imagine shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. The winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt. Failure to do so (or upon request) will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winner agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Imagine is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received. Void in Rhode Island, Puerto Rico and where prohibited by law.

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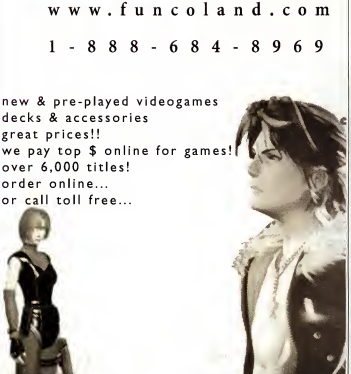

PlayStation NINTENDO 64 GAME BOY SUPER NINTENDO GAME GEAR Nintendo GENESIS

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FIRST PERSON

Slower system = Better games?

The constant rush to upgrade, accelerate, and stay ahead of the technology curve is a big, fat waste of time. That's right the EIC of **PCXL** is telling you to DE-CELERATE. What gives? Am I high? Not at the moment. Planning on launching a new magazine for gamers still using a 486? Nope. Before you start guffawing at this statement I ask that you hear me out.

I'm all for technology and beautiful graphics, but way too often they come at the expense of gameplay and eventually the consumer. There will always be a place for games that drive technology to the limits and satiate the hardcore gamers urge to push the limits of their super rig, but that doesn't mean it has to be every game. Because many developers are so focused on higher poly characters, bump-mapping, mip-stuffing, and triangle-meshing, far too little time is spent on good old-fashioned gameplay. In fact, most development teams don't even have a "Gameplay Guru." The great games always have a gameplay visionary behind them ... The Miyamotos, Sid Meiers, Peter Molyneauxs, Warren Spectors, and Yu Suzukis of the world are getting harder and harder to come by, especially in the PC gaming world. Often the project lead or mastermind behind PC games is a programmer. Sometimes this works (John Carmack at id), but often great programmers haven't got a clue what makes a good game. This doesn't mean that all good games are 2D. I'm just saying that people who don't have a PIII aren't missing much. The way I figure, if you have a PII 233 with a Voodoo2 card then you are getting all the gaming you need. I submit this list as the only evidence I'll need.

In the battle between 2D and 3D, the only true winner can be the Double D's.

PII 233	PIII 500	THE SKINNY
AOE II	*Warzane 21aa*	Gameplay is king and *AOE* does it much better than *Warzane*
Half-Life	*Aliens Vs. Predotor*	One of the few genres that actually requires a gaad system, *Half-Life* wauld have been great (but impassible) an the Build engine
Tomb Raider (original)	*Drakan*	Say what yau want abaut *TR*, there hasn't been a better adventure game since
StarCraft	*Hamewarld*	*Hamewarld* is gaad, but *StarCraft* is *StarCraft*
Cornivores	*Trespasser*	Even a WizardWorks title is better than *Trespasser*
Diabla II	*Darkstane*	"It's like *Diabla*, but in 3D" – we still like the 2D better in this case
Prince Of Persio	*Prince Of Persio 3D*	Five years of technology and we'd still rather play the original

Of course *Quoke III* on a PII 233 ain't gonna happen, so upgrade already. I think I am.

— MIKE "GEE I'D LIKE A FREE COMPUTER FOR HOME" SALMON

SECOND PERSON

When you think about it from a gameplay perspective, the reason a lot of 2D games are considered more "fun" to play than their counterpart is due to simplicity and speed. These are just by-products of making your fancy realtime strategy or RPG game on two planes of depth (with tiles and sprites) rather than three (with polygons and textures). A game like *Homeworld* keeps it simple while opening things up with a 3D element, and it's reasonably fast as well. 3D programmers are starting to refine their craft and keep things fast as well as flashy, so someday we'll get a 3D game that's as fluid and playable as a *Diablo* or *Storcroft*. (Uh, maybe *Worcroft III*?) I think you need to give it time, you ignorant slut.

— ED "I HAVE SOME ETHICS" LEE

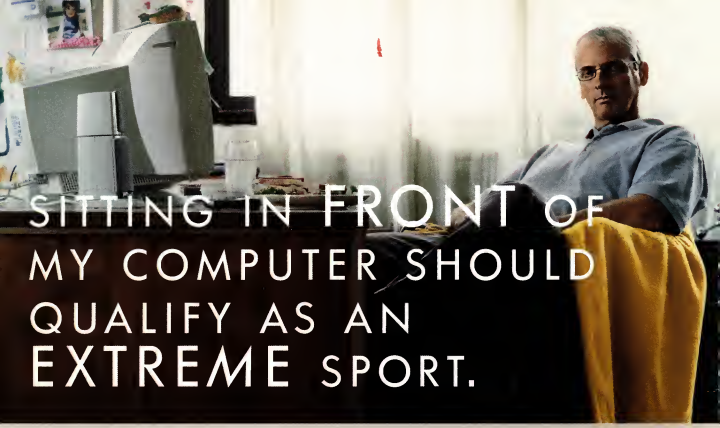
NEXT MONTH?

DOOMSDAY

THE F.A.K.K.ING END OF IT ALL
While you sit in your nuclear fallout shelter chowing down on dried fruit and beef jerky, read our cover story on *Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2*. Gaze lasciviously at our scantily clad cover model, Julie Strain. When the apocalypse comes the office will get overrun by crazy Brisbane looters. Not to fear, we have been diligently toiling on a magic flying machine upon which we will make our dramatic escape.

THE DARKER SIDE OF *SIMS*
What would happen if **PCXL** were all-powerful and could rule the world. Find out next issue as we put *The Sims* through the true test. Our citizens will loot, pillage, and have rampant sex. Plus see the first ever lesbian kiss in gaming, a World Exclusive!

IMPENDING DOOM = BRUTAL HONESTY
Of course you realize there won't be a next issue because of this whole Y2K thing. But if there were, we would include the full version of *Quake III* and *Diablo II* on our disc, a "How to turn your computer into a bomb" feature – ah, who are we kidding. We'd sit on our fat asses and play *Quoke III* all day until deadline week, then panic and rush out a marginal issue that you won't in all likelihood enjoy as much as these three pictures – perverts!



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